University of Alberta

Gendering the Responsible Risk Taker:

Social Assistance Reform and Parents' Citizenship, Market and Family Care Relations in Three Western Provinces

by

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Dedication

For M.W.

Abstract

This study is a comparative analysis of social assistance reform in three western provinces. The primary research question answered in this study is: How has the reform of social assistance programs in British Columbia (BC), Alberta and Saskatchewan (1993-2004) similarly or differently involved a de/re-gendered transformation of social citizenship rights to social assistance and to what extent are low-income parents' market and family care relations embedded in this transformation? In order to answer this question, a mixed methodology approach was utilized. Discourse analysis of the annual reports of each provincial ministry concerned with social assistance was undertaken to explore how parents' social citizenship rights or entitlement to social assistance are created – structurally – as contingent on their employability efforts. In-depth interviews were conducted with 46 parents across the three provinces to illustrate how they perceive these policy constraints and balance them – as active agents – alongside their everyday market and family care responsibilities.

There are three major findings of this study. First, discourse analysis reveals that the specific policy assumptions and strategies that underpin the shift toward employability as a basis of parents' entitlement can be grouped into five inter-related dimensions: restriction; enforcement; surveillance; downloading/ sharing responsibility; and de-/re-gendering. Across the three provinces, these dimensions enable social assistance policy to transform parents into *responsible risk takers* who are active participants in the global market place and, ideally, are unhindered by their gender (e.g. family care responsibilities). Second, combining the findings of the discourse analysis and in-depth interviews demonstrates that parents' entitlement relationships are subject to

processes of de-gendering and re-gendering that often problematically affect their market and family care relations. In each province, these processes are tied up with, and contradict, the apparent gender neutrality underpinning the conceptualization of parents' entitlement relationships in social assistance policy. In-depth interviews with parents illustrate the third and final finding of this study: parents on assistance in the western provinces have unique experiences of work/family conflict as a result of multiple barriers to their employability. I conclude this study by considering the policy implications of these findings and offer some suggestions of how to further reform social assistance policies in a way positively informed by these findings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

From the 1970s onward, the structure of the post-war Canadian welfare state has been gradually transformed. The push and pull of globalization, the related popularity of neo-liberalism and its emphasis on free market democracy, as well as federal and provincial deficits, are all factors that have played key roles in the elimination and/or replacement, re-design, and scaling back of social programs.[1] Other Western democracies (e.g. United States, Great Britain, Australia) have also experienced restructuring as a result of a combination of these factors. Indeed, the restructuring of welfare states is illustrative of broader, macro-level social change at the global level. Contemporary society (or society characteristic of late or high modernity), as Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens observe, is increasingly a *risk* society with patterns of security, trust, and risk far different than those evident during the industrialization period. In the risk society, social structures have changed (and continue to change) and in the process, so too do individuals' relationships with them.

Risk society theory offers one way of understanding the uncertainty and insecurity citizens may feel as a result of welfare state restructuring. Its view of the primacy of the market associated with increased individualization makes it relevant to welfare state restructuring. Both Beck and Giddens argue that an increased individualization has emerged in late or high modernity (Kritzinger 2002). In the risk society, traditional forms of collective identity have eroded and, thus, individuals or agents have become more individualized and free from social structures that previously created this collective identity (e.g. ties to family, class, ethnicity, and gender) (Mythen 2005). Individuals have more personal choices in creating their own personal biographies or pursuing what Giddens terms 'the reflexive project of the self' (Piper 2000). However, this does not mean that individuals are free from other forms of control and dependencies in the risk society. For example, although individuals have more employment choices, they make their choices within the wider context of labour market insecurity (Mythen 2005) (e.g. the threat of recessions, downsizing of corporations, and subsequent joblessness in global labour markets) and are responsible for preparing for this insecurity through re-training and career changes. Essentially, "individualization means *market dependency* in all dimensions of living (Kritzinger 2002: 549, italics added)."

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[1] The replacement of Family Allowances with child benefits in 1993 is one example of social programs being eliminated and replaced. The transformation of Unemployment Insurance into Employment Insurance in 1996 is an example of the re-design of existing programs. Finally, an example of the scaling back of social programs across Canada is provincial social assistance reform.

Dependence on the labour market, in turn, means increased likelihood of dependence on welfare state regulations and support (Kritzinger, 2002). In the risk society, however, the state has a reduced responsibility for citizens' risks associated with unemployment, as well as old age and health problems. While individuals may be the subject of entitlement from the welfare state, they are also the subject of obligations (Piper 2000). Individuals much more so tend to bear the responsibility for the risks associated with their individualistic choices (Beck 1992). In Canada, the individualization thesis has successfully eroded universalism as a guiding principle, to some degree, of welfare state programming and displaced recognition of structural forces as a determinant of one's life chances in policy design.[2]

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[2] The origins of welfare state programming within Canada were never completely universal in design. Nonetheless, to some degree universalism was a guiding principle since some social programs were initially based upon a principle of universalism (e.g. Family Allowances, Medicare).

A complementary way of understanding how welfare state restructuring affects individuals is offered by feminist theories of social citizenship. In these works, the central focus is often on a social policy (as structure) and how restructuring affects individuals' social citizenship or entitlement relationships (their agency) with it. Jenson and Papillon (2001) argue that the restructuring of the welfare state is paralleled by shifts in citizenship regimes. The immediate post-war social security approach of providing policy that protected collective rights and solidarity in times of risk, the *social rights citizenship regime*, has slowly been replaced by a newer, pro-market social investment approach to policies, the *social investment citizenship regime* (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003). The social investment citizenship regime can be understood as one manifestation of the risk society. In the social investment citizenship regime, individuals' social citizenship relationships with policy are increasingly conditional. For example, provided that the individual fulfills some obligations and/or takes responsibility for managing future risks, such as by investing in their human capital, only then is some policy protection afforded to them.

Feminist scholarship on social citizenship has also gendered the welfare state. Thus, it offers the potential to correct for any oversight of individuals' entitlement relationships with social policy, and how they are gendered, in risk society theory. Although Beck (1992) and Giddens (1990) discuss gender inequality and have demonstrated the importance of analyzing the family as reflecting and producing changes in late modernity (and other theorists have successfully applied their approach, see for example Smart and Neale 1999),[3] they have not paid as much attention to women and men's individual entitlement relationships with restructuring as feminist researchers have done. Feminist critiques of welfare state restructuring and citizenship illustrate how individuals' social citizenship relationships with policy – as claims makers – have gendered effects. A general consensus has emerged among researchers that women and men's market relations and family care relations are differently affected when market citizenship eclipses social citizenship (Brodie 1997; McDaniel 2002; O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999). Feminist research also shows that women and men were treated differently in the initial post-war welfare state design and still are differentially affected by the more immediate changes to social programs brought about by restructuring. Women and men have never shared the same social citizenship rights to social support in times of economic or social uncertainty. This is still the case in the modern risk society.

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[3] For example, in their empirical study on post-divorce parenthood in England/Wales after the Children Act (1989), Smart and Neale (1999) show how structural changes in divorce policy and shifts in thinking about

In this study, I draw upon these complementary theories of risk and citizenship to examine one case of welfare state restructuring, the scaling back of social assistance programs in three western provinces. The guiding research question of this study is: How has the reform of social assistance programs in British Columbia (BC), Alberta and Saskatchewan (1993-2004) similarly or differently involved a de/re-gendered transformation of social citizenship rights to social assistance and to what extent are low-income parents' market and family care relations embedded in this transformation?[4]

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families are matched with or confronted by divorced parents own active practices of negotiations surrounding care, morality, and the self.

[4] In this study, the term market relations refers to parents' engagement in paid work, their attempts at engaging in paid work (job searches) or their participation in welfare-to-work programming. The term family care relations refers to the care they provide to their children, partners if applicable, and other individuals (friends or other family members) in their lives. Specifically, the idea of caring is understood to refer to the mental, emotional, and physical effort that is involved in looking after, responding to, and supporting others (Baines, Evans, and Neysmith 1992: 22). Caring can also be further differentiated into 'caring about,' which involves affection for the care recipient, and 'caring for', which involves activities

Social assistance is an excellent case of policy that epitomizes characteristics of the risk society and shifts in social citizenship regimes. Social assistance programs across Canada have been transformed from the early 1990s onward to prioritize individuals' active responsibility for their family's economic instability. A market-oriented approach, commonly known as welfare-to-work, has infiltrated income support policy and undermined traditional social citizenship orientations (Breitkreuz 2005; Gorlick and Brethour 1998). Individuals no longer have social citizenship rights to social assistance primarily upon the basis of need. Instead, their receipt of benefits is contingent on their 'employability' efforts, which includes their mandatory participation in employment and education training programs or their seeking of employment. The inclusion of conditions and/or obligations as part of individuals' social citizenship rights to social assistance fits with the social investment regime and, simultaneously, illustrates the risk society's assumption that individuals can and should resolve their economic insecurity. Conditions and obligations even act as mechanisms of punishment for individuals' failure to manage risk. Within the risk society, failure to make appropriate choices is the responsibility of the individual. Hence, poverty, the ultimate consequence of an individuals' failed choices (Piper 2000), is also the individual's responsibility.

The choice to comparatively examine reform in the western provinces was made for two reasons. First, the bulk of research on welfare reform and gender is specific to the province of Ontario. The western provinces have been largely ignored. It is the findings of this research on Ontario welfare reform that also make a gendered study of the western experience compelling. For example, Evans (1996) demonstrates that women

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and tasks dedicated to ensuring the well-being of the care recipient (Leira 1994; Tronto 1998). Hence, household labour tasks and caregiving, writ large, are captured in my use of the term family care relations.

in Ontario are now no longer conceived of as 'mothers' entitled to income support on the basis of this caregiving status but conceived of as 'workers,' even when family responsibilities can impede their labour market participation. Swift and Birmingham's (2000) focus groups with lone mothers in Ottawa, Ontario led them to conclude that restructuring social assistance programs with an emphasis on employability infiltrates the 'private' relationship between mothers and their children by pressuring them to consume, positioning them to compete for scare resources like subsidized child care, and devalues their caring labour while the caring labour of middle class mothers is encouraged and professionalized. McMullin, Davies and Cassidy (2002) interviewed lone mothers accessing social assistance or who had recently accessed social assistance in London, Ontario and found that cuts to benefits undermine their capability to care for their children and make it difficult for them to find paid employment.

Second, examining three provinces over a specific time period allows one to see how the policy conceptualization of individuals' social citizenship rights on the basis of their employability emerged in all three provinces. It also allows one to see whether or not there are distinct differences in how this was achieved in policy design. While the cut-off of 2004 was an arbitrary decision, the choice of 1993 as the starting point for the study was based on the edited collection, *Deficit Reduction in the Far West: The Great West Experiment*, by Boothe and Reid (2001). According to Boothe and Reid's analysis, all three western provinces share 1992/1993 as the time in which they commenced restructuring in response to provincial deficits. Social assistance reform was either a distinct part of early efforts to reduce the deficit, as in the case of Alberta, a response to re-occurring deficits such as in BC, or a way of maintaining budget surplus as in Saskatchewan.

Insights of feminist research on citizenship are utilized to de-/re-gender the transformation of social citizenship rights to social assistance – the emphasis on parents' employability as a condition of benefit receipt. Specifically, a gendered lens is utilized to examine how gender ideologically shapes the structure of social assistance policy and parents' experiences of the gendered effects of this transformation in entitlement. Indeed, one of the major concerns of this study is to illustrate not only the structure of social assistance policy in the three provinces and how it has changed, but also how parents experience restructuring as active agents.

One additional point must be made about the use of a gendered lens in this study. Instead of simply using the term 'gendering,' the use of 'de-/-re-gendering' in the guiding research question is deliberate. It rests upon the theory of gender as a social structure, and specific to social assistance policy, models of gender upheld in policy, parents' gendered interactions with policy, and parents' 'normative' assumptions about gender. For example, the employability emphasis effectively de-genders the current structure of social assistance policy (or makes it gender neutral) since both mothers and fathers' employability efforts act as a basis to claim income support. However, as the theory of gender as a social structure argues, parents have particular beliefs about gender, such as whether mothers or fathers are more responsible for caregiving, that are ideologically and interactionally shaped. Moreover, social assistance caseworkers may expose parents to other assumptions about gender that are not shared by parents themselves. De-/re-gendering is a term that captures how parents' entitlement relationships with apparently gender neutral social assistance policy can be very distinctly gendered.

Indeed, specific differences in the three provinces suggest that usage of a de-/re-gendering perspective will yield interesting findings. Although all three provinces share the policy goal of connecting social assistance recipients to the labour market today, the effects of gender on this goal are not equally shared. The province of BC harshly imposes mandatory employability efforts on parents as a condition of their benefit receipt. Parents are considered employable when their youngest child reaches the age of three and have a time limit of two years to find work or potentially face sanctions for failing to do so (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2002b). In comparison, parents in Alberta are still expected to seek work when their children are just six months old (Evans 1996; Freiler and Cerny 1998), an outcome of the earlier 1993 draconian reforms. In the current state of Saskatchewan social assistance policy, a notion of entitlement still exists alongside the expectation of parents' employability efforts and parents are considered employable at the discretion of their caseworker. If one were to imagine a continuum of gendered reform strategies, with the left end representing hard strategies and the right end representing soft strategies, BC would be furthest left, followed by Alberta and then Saskatchewan.

Having established the major research question and how gendering theories of risk and citizenship connect to it, it is now necessary to describe the organization of this study. It is in Chapter 2 that I set the stage for the study in more comprehensive detail. I begin with a brief overview of Canada's original post-war welfare state, emphasizing how the system of social security was intended to collectively protect citizens from risks that they could potentially or would certainly experience. With respect to the risk of income insecurity, I introduce how the design of social assistance programs in the provinces was part of the post-war social contract. I then turn to examining how forces of social change, from the inside (nationally) and outside (internationally), as well as neo-liberal ideology, led to restructuring of the post-war social contract from the 1970s onward. Three specific factors are introduced as the main impetuses behind the reform of social assistance programs: economic deficits, spikes in social assistance caseloads, and the replacement of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST).

Following this, the concept of social citizenship rights is introduced and shown to undergo simultaneously paradigmatic change alongside the restructuring of the welfare state, nationally, and social assistance programs, provincially. In particular, the post-war social contract is introduced as synonymous with the social rights citizenship regime whereas the current structure of the welfare state is argued to be synonymous with the social investment citizenship regime characteristic of the risk society. In the majority of the discussion to this point in the chapter, a gendered critique is largely absent. This is done intentionally to set up the following chapters in this study. In fact, it is in the final sections of Chapter 2 that the theory of gender as a social structure is more fully introduced and shown to be a useful means by which to further gender the theories of risk society and citizenship drawn upon in the examination of social assistance reform in this study.

Specific research questions are then introduced as guiding a mixed methodological analysis. I describe how the methodology of this study was shaped by an interest in explicating the duality of structure/agency surrounding parents' experiences on social assistance through the usage of three methods: discourse analysis of policy documents, in-depth interviews with 46 parents on assistance across the three provinces, and the presentation of secondary descriptive statistics. This mixed methodological approach enables the examination of parents' everyday lives on assistance in the midst of gendered, structural change to social assistance policy. Readers are directed to Appendix A to find detailed information on each type of method.

Three research questions that derive from the primary, guiding research question drive the remaining organization and presentation of this study. One of each of the three questions is answered in Chapters 3, 4, or 5. Chapter 3 answers: How do dominant political/ideological assumptions about market relations and family care relations shape policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights to social assistance? In documenting the Great West Experiment of social assistance reform in the three western provinces, the first half of the chapter begins with an overview of the political parties and the political ideologies (and/or beliefs and values) that influenced the first and subsequent waves of reform in each province. The second half of the chapter presents the results of the discourse analysis of the annual reports of each ministry of social services and other public-use policy documents on reform. The objective of this discourse analysis is to delve into the political/ideological assumptions by examining how the discourse surrounding parents' entitlement on the basis of their employability efforts was created in each province. Outlining how social assistance policy structurally creates parents' employability is improved upon by inter-weaving the results of in-depth interviews with parents on assistance in the three provinces. The creation of this discourse is argued to be characteristic of the social investment citizenship regime within the risk society. Emphasis is also placed upon the gender neutral character of the discourse.

In Chapter 4, the research question answered is: How are policy shifts in conceptualizing social citizenship rights to social assistance subject to the processes of de-/re-gendering? Specifically, Chapter 4 is where the absence of gender in the two preceding chapters is corrected. I begin with a review of key points from feminist scholarship to highlight how welfare state restructuring has effects on citizenship that are deeply gendered. I then present the remaining results of my discourse analysis that are specific to my interest in gender. Here, I also include thematic analysis of in-depth interviews to illustrate how the emphasis on parents' employability efforts occurs and is experienced by parents in de-/re-gendered ways across the provinces. Contradictions are exposed between apparent gender neutral policy assumptions, on the one hand, and the gendered everyday realities of parents on assistance, on the other.

Chapter 5 answers the final research question of this study: Do policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance shape and/or conflict with their everyday market relations and family care relations? The majority of this Chapter is centered on parents' actual everyday life experiences as reported in in-depth interviews. I ground this analysis in sociological scholarship on work/family conflict on the assumption that should parents on assistance experience conflict in ways similar to parents in paid work, it can be expected that the way their entitlement relationships are conceived are not necessarily a good match with their everyday responsibilities (e.g. caregiving).

In the conclusion (Chapter 6), I summarize the major findings of this study and discuss their policy implications. I then turn to answering a pressing policy question, simply stated as: where do we go from here? I offer some possible suggestions for trying to better address through policy the multiple barriers parents experience when trying to meet the expectations of their employability, let alone exit assistance.

The overall approach to this study makes two important contributions to the existing body of knowledge on welfare reform, citizenship, and gender. First, this study uses social assistance policy as a specific case by which to examine characteristics of the risk society and transformations in citizen entitlement through a gendered lens. Second, it is the use of a gendered lens and a mixed methodological approach that enables one to see how structural reforms are deterministic of parents' everyday lives with gendered effects and how parents' resist policy constraints of their employability in ways that show they are indeed active agents.

The major conclusion of this study is quite clear. Undoubtedly, there has been a de-/re-gendered transformation in policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance which has serious implications for their everyday market relations and family care relations in the risk society. It is now time to turn to the details of how this conclusion was reached.

Chapter 2

Setting the Stage, 1993-2004

Social assistance reform strategies adopted in each of the three western provinces are intricately related to the forces of social change that created the retrenchment of the post-war welfare state. Such forces include: changes in the capitalist economy as a result of depressions and recessions; increasing modernization and globalization; and differing and conflicting political and moral viewpoints about policy agendas. Essentially, these forces of social change have affected the relationships between social structures and agents, prompting the theorists Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens to classify contemporary society as a *risk society*. With respect to this study, the most relevant example of how citizens' relations to others and social institutions have changed is the transformation in how individuals' social citizenship rights are conceived in Canadian social policy.

Contrary to the initial design of the post-war welfare state, citizens are no longer perceived as entitled to state support on the basis of their experiences of unexpected risks. Specifically, there has been a gradual attenuation of the 'social' in policies initially designed to promote social and income security and social citizenship, such as social assistance. For example, the existence of welfare-to-work programs confirms that social assistance policy is increasingly designed to re-integrate individuals back into the labour market. Social assistance policy conceives of the ideal 'market' citizen as one who is capable of providing for oneself and her/his family irregardless of disruptions caused by loss of employment, illness, or family responsibilities.

In this chapter, the focus is on setting the stage for social assistance reform in the provinces by reviewing these forces of social change and their outcomes for social citizenship. Specifically I situate this study of the de-/re-gendered transformation of social citizenship rights in social assistance in BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan in a larger, macro-societal context. What follows is an overview of the reasoning behind the initial design and implementation of the post-war welfare state as a mechanism of social security, especially the role social assistance policy played. Emphasis is placed on subsequent changes to the structure of the welfare state and the ideological contract that underpinned it over time. Policy changes at the federal level of government and their influence on the re-design of social assistance programs are also explored. I then draw linkages between these forces of social change and evolution of citizenship regimes and shifting policy paradigms. In particular, I draw attention to the emerging contradictions and fault lines that result when a social citizenship rights regime is replaced by a social investment citizenship regime.

In the final sections of this chapter, I turn to the research design of this dissertation. I introduce the three research questions that derive from my central research question and explain how I intend to use gender as a social structure to theorize the gendered transformations in parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance. In describing the mixed methodology of this study, I show how it is the most appropriate design through which to understand the gendered intersection of parents' lives with policy.

Historicizing the Post-War Welfare State: A System of Social Security

Following the First World War (1914-1918), the depression of the 1930s presented an obvious contradiction to the accepted economic theory that full employment was natural and periodic unemployment and recessions were temporary problems that would solve themselves through inevitable market processes. Rice and Prince (2000) explain that a growing consensus emerged among many Canadians that structural and economic forces at national and international levels influenced individuals' experiences of unemployment and poverty at local levels. Risks associated with income instability could not be pinpointed to individual causes, such as poor choices or an insufficient work ethic, but were tied to transformations in the larger economy. The idea of a 'social contract' that emphasized a sense of collective responsibility for citizens, a pooling of risk across society (Yalnizyan 1994), was a key driving force behind the intensified interest in establishing a social security system throughout the 1940s (Rice and Prince 2000). The central goal was a welfare state that would support individuals in need from the cradle to the grave (Brown and Lauder 2001).

John Maynard Keynes significantly influenced the development of the social contract that would underpin the welfare state; the post-war social contract is often known as the Keynesian welfare state (Simeon 1994). In *The General Theory of Employment Interest and Money* (1936) Keynes argued that the government must spend money in order to boost the economy, such as by investing in business and modifying levels of individual income, consumption and investment; thus, actively creating full-employment (Rice and Prince 2000; Simeon 1994). Government could cushion effects of the boom-bust episodes of the business cycle by manipulating the income of individuals through taxation. In a slower economy, taxes could be lowered so that the demand for goods and services and full employment could be maintained. When times of growth and profit were realized, the money lost to government by cutting taxes could be regained by raising them (Brown and Lauder 2001).

The Report on Social Security in Canada, written by Leonard Marsh and presented to the House of Commons Special Committee on Social Security in 1943, was another influential factor behind the government's growing interest in becoming responsible for a range of services, benefits, rights and duties for citizens (Rice and Prince, 2000). Within this document, Marsh outlined a package of social programs that addressed categories of social need, such as employment-related benefits and child allowances. He also documented the importance of stable employment as a necessary precursor to social security (Battle 1998; Rice and Prince 2000). Although not all of his recommendations were implemented, much of the scope of the welfare state that appeared complete in the form of federal, provincial, and inter-governmental social programs in the 1970s can be tied to Marsh's proposed plans for social security in Canada (Djao, 1983: 25, cited in Rice and Prince 2000: 62).

According to Simeon (1994), three central characteristics made up the postwar social contract: a policy blueprint, political accommodation, and an accommodation of values. The policy model consisted of economic and social concerns. Keynesian fiscal policy was paralleled by a commitment to freer international trade and closer economic integration with the United States, but balanced out with a commitment to the construction of a social safety net that provided risk insurance. Social policy could be used as a tool co-operatively with economic management (Rice and Prince, 2000).

Hence, the emerging state structure after the Second World War consisted of *laissez faire* beliefs matched with a system of welfare federalism intended to correct excessive reliance on competitive markets (Drache 1995).

Since government and other powerful groups in society (business, labour and agriculture) jointly approved of providing a social safety net at the same time that business would be left free to grow, Simeon (1994) argues that the post-war social contract was also a result of political accommodation. This accommodation took the local adaptation in the form of federal/provincial cost sharing for some social programs, including social assistance via the CAP. Finally, Simeon (1994) attributes the existence of the post-war social contract to the political and policy consensus shared by many that was based on the idea that economic and social values (e.g. economic growth and efficiency, and social justice and equity) could be accommodated under the same agenda. This approach followed suit with Keynes' argument that justice was intimately connected to economic certainty (Brown and Lauder 2001)

According to Drache (1995), it was this accommodation of values that wasn't always easy to maintain. An absence of full elite commitment to the social contract of the post-war welfare state, he argues, is suggested by the piecemeal construction of social security programs over three decades. Nonetheless, even though their implementation may not have been expeditiously smooth, all major social programs were predicated on the assumptions of Keynesian economics and the related ideals of social justice and equality (Armitage 1988). Moreover, the emerging welfare state also assumed the federal government would maintain responsibility for the bulk of the design, administration and funding of social security programs for its citizenry. In their original form, the major social security programs introduced from the 1940s onward included: Unemployment Insurance (UI) (1940), Family Allowances (1945), Old Age pensions (1952), Medicare (1966), the Canada Pension Plan (1964), the CAP (1966), and family income maintenance payments (see Baker, 1997 or Rice and Prince, 2000, for a complete discussion).[5] Some of these programs were distinctly gendered. For example, Family Allowances were a universal program designed to help with the costs of raising children and were paid to all *mothers* with children under sixteen (eighteen in later years) each month regardless of their net family income or employment status (Baker and Tippin 1999). Other programs, such as Unemployment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, and Old Age pensions, were less gender-specific but did tend to benefit men more than women since it was men who were primarily attached to labour markets until a least the 1970s.

During this post-war growth of the welfare state, provincial social assistance programs varied in design and administration (Boychuk 1998). Baker and Tippin (1999) explain that income support programs have been in existence since Confederation but were initially the responsibility of local government. They shared the common intent of providing (and targeting) assistance to those who could not work because of age, disability or lack of employment or those who experienced inadequate benefits through other programs, such as UI (primarily men), and had no other means to financially support themselves or their families (Banting 1987; Hess 1992). It was the mobilization of disenfranchised groups (e.g. unemployed citizens, welfare rights groups) in the 1960s that created a broad-based acceptance that inequality was too great in Canadian society and spurred on the consolidation of CAP in 1966 (Yalnizyan 1994). Under this plan, the funding of these programs would be 50/50 cost-shared by the provincial and federal governments (Baker and Tippin 1999). One of the reasons the federal government entered into the program and provinces were open to this support was that provinces had difficulty affording the services on their own (Battle and Torjman 1995).

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[5] Many of these social security programs have changed since their original inception, such as in name (e.g. Employment Insurance not Unemployment Insurance) and entitlement (e.g. Family Allowances are now known as the Canada Child Tax Benefit and are a means-tested not a universal program). Some of these changes are noted in later sections. An in-depth discussion of all changes is outside of the scope of this chapter.

Under the agreement, social assistance programs were a residual, 'last resort' alternative to participation in the labour market. Like their predecessors, they were still targeted at individuals who were unable to maintain economic stability and security. Provinces, however, were obligated to base receipt of assistance on a needs-test (Hess 1992; Rice and Prince 2000) and recognize five rights of citizens as delineated in CAP: the right to an adequate income; the right to assistance when in need; the right to appeal decisions made about their assistance; the right to claim assistance whatever one's province of origin; and the right to assistance without forced participation in work and training programs (Klein and Montgomery 2001: 7; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky 1999).[6] Aside from the recognition of these rights of citizens, provinces had full discretion in the administration and design of their social assistance programs; CAP placed no constraints on the minimum or maximum benefit levels (Banting 1987).

Yalnizyan (1994: 17) sums up the architecture of social security in post-Depression Canada as resting on two pillars: 1) the availability of stable, well-paid jobs as a source of income security;[7] and 2) the existence of supports for those temporarily or permanently outside the labour market. She explains that while the two pillars buttress one another, the foundation of the entire structure is the availability of capital to invest in productive activities and through taxes, provide a revenue base to finance social programs. In the next section, it is apparent that it was predominantly crisis associated with capital that over-turned the consensus underpinning the social contract of the post-war welfare state.

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[6] Applicants were eligible for assistance if they met certain requirements, e.g. their financial expenses exceed their resources, thus demonstrating their need (Hess, 1992).

The Welfare State in Crisis

Fractures in the architecture of the welfare state were the result of national and international tensions that centred on issues of governance, economy, and normative assumptions about social behaviour. It was these fractures, from the inside and out, that prompted the identification of the welfare state as in a state of crisis.

From the Inside

By the 1970s, Canada's social safety net was well established. However, the maintenance of its structure was soon called into question by a greater slow down in economic growth compared to that which occurred in the 1960s (signified by rising levels of unemployment and a shortage of skilled workers to match technological change), the energy shocks and lessening productivity of the early 1970s, and the emergence of a federal deficit (Brown and Lauder 2001; Simeon 1994; Yalnizyan 1994). From the mid-

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[7] Since it was primarily men who acted as breadwinners during the initial growth of the welfare state, they benefited more from the interest in full employment than women did.

1970s to the late 1980s, a growing 'crisis' mentality surrounding the architecture of the welfare state flourished (Rice and Prince, 2000). Criticisms of the welfare state came from many social and economic viewpoints linked to differing political perspectives, thereby suggesting that the political accommodation surrounding the post-war social contract was beginning to erode (Simeon, 1994).

Rice and Prince (2000) classify criticisms of the welfare state according to particular perspectives (Left, Right, and feminist). Whereas left-leaning academics and politicians found fault with the existence of inequality and poverty in the midst of prosperity, right-leaning academics found contradictions between social programs and economic conditions alarming, and feminists critiqued the implications for women of oppressive and patriarchal structures in social policy. Rice and Prince maintain that by the early 1970s, critics of the political left argued that many social programs were not meeting the needs of people. In particular, the left took issue with how governments were using welfare systems to control and blame the poor, how economic conditions contradicted many of the assumptions of the design of the welfare state (e.g. the gap between what governments were spending and the funds they were raising through taxes), and how new forms of capitalism (e.g. disorganized capitalism characterized by a growing division between skilled and unskilled workers), competition between companies, and less state intervention, affected the state's ability to solve social problems (Rice and Prince, 2000: 86-89).

In contrast, on the right, conservatives and neo-conservatives directed their critique to how welfare state programming undermined market solutions for social problems. The view from the political right was that social policy infringed upon the creation of wealth in the market economy and in a related manner, personal individual freedom to engage in such activity. A popular criticism advanced by neo-conservatives was that the welfare state created 'dependency' amongst individuals benefiting from its social programs. When based upon notions of rights and entitlements, neo-conservatives maintained that welfare programs were the main producers of dysfunctional work values and family structures. Finally, critics from the right maintained that social programs should no longer play an active role in the management of the economy (Rice and Prince, 2000: 90-93). The right maintained that Keynesian economic management and the comprehensiveness of social welfare programs created the 1970s crisis of the state (Hirst 2000).

Other criticisms of the welfare state that came from feminists placed attention on the state's inability to address the gendered, racialized, and class-based inequalities that were perpetuated by social welfare programs (Hamilton 2005). The 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women provided a feminist agenda for advocacy and change and argued that the state should hold more responsibility for addressing women's claims for social justice. Feminists also took issue with the use of government policies to marginalize women and at the same time conceal inequalities on the basis of gender through the use of gender neutral language in policy (Rice and Prince 2000).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the scope and breadth of the criticisms of the welfare state were similar to those made earlier. Several challenges suggesting the need for change were identified: the rise of unemployment in some regions, thereby creating greater demand for social security provisions (e.g. EI, social assistance); the growth of non-standard jobs and the increasingly polarization between "good" jobs and "bad" jobs;

the subsequent increase in demand for child care provisions as a result of women's increased labour force participation; individual taxpayer fatigue at the same time corporations benefited from tax breaks; and an increasing federal deficit (Battle 1998; Brown 1994). The primary domestic challenge that over-rode all others in determining the 'crisis' and encouraged the subsequent call for policy change was the existence of federal and provincial deficits (Bakker 1996; Battle 1998; Brown 1994; Courchene 1997; Yalnizyan 1994). The continued spending increases that were built into social programs, increased costs associated with higher levels of unemployment, lesser revenues associated with slower productivity growth, reduced corporate taxes, and growing taxpayer resistance to higher individual taxes were all factors cited to contribute to these deficits (Brown, 1994; Simeon, 1994). Battle (1998) maintains that it is the commitment by both federal and provincial governments to reduce these deficits that has dominated Ottawa's agenda since the mid-1980s – the cost of the Keynesian welfare state was surpassing the state's capacity to finance it.

From the Outside

Paralleling this awareness of the fiscal crisis associated with the post-war social contract was the recognition that economic nationalism, as guided by Keynesian theory, only succeeded because of the economic conditions surrounding its inception. As Brown and Lauder (2001) explain, national economies were isolated by 'walls' in the form of exchange rates, trade barriers and other controls on international competition. When taxes were cut as deemed necessary, governments were confident that businesses would invest in the national economy and individuals would consume home-grown products.

Considering the goal of full employment and the consensus between employers and workers that made it possible, these 'walls' also meant that "…workers in Detroit or Dagenham were insulated from competition from low wage economies" (Brown and Lauder, 2001: 81).

The forces of globalization contradict these economic conditions that made the post-war social contract possible.[8] As exemplified by the emergence of non-Western industrializing economies, and complementary market policies (e.g. trade and other multi-lateral agreements) (Brown 1994: 101), Giddens' (1998: 33) maintains globalization is not just about economic interdependence but also the transformation of space and time. Globalization *pulls* away from the nation state in that some powers nations used to have, such as Keynesian economic management, have been weakened. It *pushes down* in that it creates new demands and new possibilities for regenerating local identities. It *squeezes sideways* by creating new economic and cultural regions that cut across boundaries of nation states.

Not surprisingly, Simeon (1994) maintains that globalization undermines the policy blueprint, political accommodation and values that characterized the post-war social contract. International competition for markets and investments requires national economies to become leaner and meaner; nation-states must be fiscally responsible if they are to reap the benefits of a global market. Thus, the phenomenon both constrains decision-making among governments and alters their policy agendas. An increasing role played by corporations, who argue for the maximization of profits through the removal of trade barriers, the elimination of national standards, and the implementation of free trade

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[8] According to Brown (1994), in the most basic sense globalization refers to the integration of global markets for goods, service and finance, and is the result of innovations in technology and communication, such as when a single product can be produced in different parts of the world at the lowest cost.

(Rice and Prince 2000) also contributes to an anti-post-war social contract approach of less government interference and regulation of the economy (Bakker 1996).

Given these processes, provinces are more inclined to pursue their own economic desires rather than accommodate those of the federal government by banding together. The national economy is increasingly shaped by a north-south and global dynamic, an 'internationalizing' of regions, rather than an east-west dynamic (Courchene 1997; Simeon 1994). Provinces desire economic environments characterized by cross-border and international negotiations, which require greater policy flexibility (Courchene, 1997). Not only is the political accommodation characteristic of the post-war social contract threatened by globalization, finding a middle road between the values of efficiency and equity, economic growth and social justice, is quickly being abandoned. Policies designed to promote employment equity or increased equality are increasingly viewed as threatening employment and resulting in government over-spending (Simeon, 1994).

According to Hirst (2000), globalization is becoming a new grand narrative. The rhetoric of globalization creates the belief that uncontrollable global forces cannot be tampered with but must be accommodated. In the new global economy, governments meet these challenges by restructuring their economic and social agendas. Downgrading the funding of social support programs is often the action of choice (Bakker 1996).

Neo-liberal Ideology and Budgetary Concerns

In some respects, the welfare state actually grew in its provision of social supports post-1970, such as its recognition of equality rights through the implementation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Rice and Prince, 2000). The over-arching theme of crisis, specifically 'fiscal crisis,' however, was a powerful one that overshadowed and undermined many of the positive policies of the welfare state. Given the dual concerns with government deficits and global, market forces, the growing consensus was that the social contract of the post-war welfare state was obsolete and had to be re-written to complement the post-1970 changing economy (Brown, 1994).

Baker (1997) argues that an ideology of economic rationalism shaped the neo-conservative argument that government expenditures must be reduced in order to finance existing and future programs and that the scope of the existing welfare state was to blame for its crisis. Rice and Prince (2000: 109) also observe that by the late 1980s, there was "rightward shift in the dominant discourse of politics and policy making generally towards promoting markets." The state was less and less understood as a mechanism through which social policy could constrain market risks and instead understood as a mechanism through which markets could be expanded. In essence, a neo-liberal ideology of free market democracy was emerging as the primary discourse by which to understand the necessity for changes to the architecture of the welfare state, regardless of political party affiliations.[9] As Hartmann (2005) explains, the influence of neo-liberalism is both as an economic doctrine or political ideology. As an economic doctrine, it upholds the primacy of handling economic affairs within nation-states through the principle of free markets (Bakker 1996; Broad and Antony 1999; Hartman 2005). As a political ideology, the primary guiding principle it provides is that the role of the state should be limited.

The international appeal of neo-liberalism is often credited to the policy approaches of both Thatcher in the United Kingdom (UK) and Reagan in the United

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[9] Indeed, Rice and Prince (2000) and Baker (1997) agree that since there are few distinguishing differences between how the Liberals and Conservatives approached Canadian policy reforms from the 1980s onward, both can now be considered centre-right in terms of political perspectives.

States (U.S.). In Canada as elsewhere, neo-liberal restructuring strategies are based on the values of self-reliance, individualism, pro-market policy, a reduced state, and global competition (Broad and Antony 1999; Brodie 1996b; Hughes, Lowe, and McKinnon 1996). The strategies adopted are often oriented to the parallel goals of reducing deficits (and thereby encouraging greater international market competition) and scaling back individual entitlement to social support benefits.

Between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the federal, Conservative government made several changes to social programs that Rice and Prince (2000) classify as programmatic retrenchment. Programmatic retrenchment refers to the cutting of the size and expense of social programs, implementing more restrictions into program design, and further shifting policies into a residual direction. Since this retrenchment has most often occurred by scaling back individuals' entitlements to benefits but without their or the general public's full knowledge and consent about the changes (Battle and Torjman, 1995; Yalnizyan, 1994), Battle and Torjman (1995) dub this approach 'social policy by stealth.'

Changes in the mid to late 1980s as a result of restructuring included restrictions on entitlement to Family Allowance on the basis of income (families with net incomes over $50,000 had their Family Allowances cut or ended in what became known as the 'clawback,' (National Council of Welfare, hereafter NCW, 1998) and tightened eligibility requirements for unemployment insurance (now employment insurance) (Baker, 1997; Battle, 1998; Yalnizyan, 1994). The federal budget speech on behalf of the Conservative government in April 1989 included an announcement that seniors with high incomes would receive their old age pension cheques but would be obligated to repay some or all of the amounts they received (above $50,000 in individual net income) at a rate of 15 percent in income tax (NCW, 2002).[10]

Despite the Liberal party's role in designing original social welfare programs, they too continued with neo-liberal restructuring when they came into power in 1993 (Baker, 1997; Battle and Torjman, 1995). At this time, the Canadian government debt and deficit was higher than most other OECD countries (OECD, 1994, cited in Baker 1997). Consistent with the Conservative government, the fiscal crisis was a driving force behind the Liberals' subsequent reforms. It is important to note, however, that restructuring did not always take place 'stealthily' or independent of public knowledge. Social Security Reviews played an important role. The Social Security Review launched in 1994 was designed to consider reforms to federal spending (Battle and Torjman, 1995). Several different supplementary papers, situated under the major discussion paper *Improving Social Security in Canada*, outlined the federal government's interest in reforming social security on the basis of a human resources model that would place responsibility for unemployment upon the individual, not the structure of the labour market or economy (Brodie 1996a). In *The Context of Reform: A Supplementary Paper*, the idea of social security predicated on the values of social justice, compassion, and tolerance (Canada 1994b) was stated to be over-burdened by many of the forces of social change discussed previously. The overall message of the paper was one of fiscal crisis that could be best addressed by scaling back individuals' entitlements to support. The paper concludes: "Fiscal pressures make current programs difficult to sustain. One possible solution is to make them focus less on entitlement and more on the real needs facing Canadians (Canada 1994b: 35)."

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[10] Gee and McDaniel (1991) maintain that this 'clawback' was largely a response to the parallel crisis discourse surrounding population aging.

In particular, the paper identified the federal government's inability to afford Unemployment Insurance and social assistance programs (Canada 1994b: 8). Ironically, it was in the 1994 Budget that the Finance Minister introduced major changes to UI, including restrictions on eligibility and reduced duration of benefits (Yalnizyan, 1994) and cuts to federal transfers to provinces *before* the findings of the Review were even compiled, demonstrating that reforms would indeed match an over-arching anti-deficit campaign (Battle and Torjman 1995). In 1996, the Liberal government changed the program's name to Employment Insurance (EI) and encouraged an emphasis on personal responsibility for financial instability as opposed to barriers in the structure of the labour market (Baker, 1997). The Liberal government also made further changes to child benefits when they replaced the Child Tax Benefit with the National Child Benefit program (replacing the Child Tax Benefit with the Canada Child Tax Benefit in the process) in 1998. Subsequent changes were undertaken to direct benefits to low-income parents to aid them in their care of their children, thereby removing mothers' entitlements to support and determining eligibility on the basis of parents' financial situations.

Specific Factors in the Reform of Western Social Assistance Programs

Social assistance programming across Canada was also affected by this larger scale restructuring of the welfare state. Since the focus of the remainder of this study is on the form and content of reforms to social assistance in the western provinces, here the emphasis is on the factors that prompted each province to engage in reform, especially because of the economic and social political/policy context of the early to mid-1990s. These three major factors include: 1) provincial economic deficits experienced by all provinces; 2) spikes in social assistance caseloads; and 3) the replacement of CAP with CHST.

Economic Deficits

The push of the 'fiscal crisis' argument meant that by the 1990s, all Canadian provinces were pursuing deficit reduction strategies with great intensity. The goal of budget balance has had a profound influence on the shape, scope and objectives of provincial policy. In the early 1990s, all three western provinces were experiencing economic deficits. In 1993, BC's deficit stood at 3.2% of GDP (Boothe, 2001). A series of large deficits since 1986/87 meant that by 1993, Alberta's deficit was more than 5 percent of GDP. Far more serious than the other provinces, Saskatchewan's deficit was almost 11 percent of the GDP by 1992. Since all three provinces experienced similar stagnant economies, it was not unusual that they all launched deficit reduction campaigns. These campaigns all commenced over the space of one government fiscal year (Boothe, 2001) – 1992/93 to 1993/94.[11]

The development of deficit-reduction strategies involved the consideration of several elements. All three provinces commissioned independent panels to review their fiscal situations, varyingly incorporated Crown corporations for borrowing and raising revenue (BC and Saskatchewan) and privatization (especially in Alberta), and managed the consequences of declines in federal transfer payments (Boothe, 2001). Actual strategies developed involved a trade-off between increasing revenues and decreasing expenditures and, thus, differed according to the specific economic considerations in each province.

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[11] Boothe (2001: 136) defines the entire deficit-reduction period for each province as 1992/93-1995/96 for Saskatchewan and BC and 1993/94-1996/97 for Alberta.

In the first three years of their deficit-reduction periods (1992/93-1995/96), both BC and Saskatchewan raised taxes to increase revenues whereas Alberta raised revenue by increasing health care premiums.[12] In BC, the raising of revenue was matched with increased spending. Spending rose over the deficit-reduction period by almost 26%, with the largest changes occurring in health, education and social services (by 38%). In comparison, Premier Romanow of Saskatchewan balanced the raising of revenue with reduction in expenditures (Boothe, 2001); overall expenditures in the areas of resource conservation, economic development, health, and education decreased by 20%. Similar to Saskatchewan, Alberta also decreased its expenditures by 16% over its deficit-reduction period.

Interestingly, in both BC and Saskatchewan, spending on social services increased over their deficit reduction periods. Unlike BC and Saskatchewan, Alberta implemented a 20% decrease in spending on social services (Boothe, 2001) while not increasing taxes (Cooper and Mebs, 2000). De Clercy (2001) explains that the scope of policy change was much broader in Alberta and Saskatchewan than in BC. It involved eliminating or redesigning departments, boards and commissions to cut costs and consolidate service responsibilities. In all three provinces, their respective economies were booming by the second year of their deficit-reduction programs. By the end of the four year period, BC had reduced its deficit to 0.3 percent of the GDP but not eliminated it, Alberta achieved a 3.2 percent surplus, and Saskatchewan had turned a 10.7 percent (of GDP) deficit into a 0.7 percent surplus (Boothe 2001). In contrast to Alberta and Saskatchewan, the province of BC did not completely eliminate its deficit. Although each government achieved its objective of balancing the budget in its first term of office, only Alberta and Saskatchewan have consistently presented a series of balanced budgets (De Clercy 2001). In fact, in 1996, BC again experienced a provincial deficit.

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[12] In Saskatchewan, the 1992 budget imposed a 10 percent Deficit Reduction Surtax on provincial personal income taxes; in 1995, this tax was eliminated for low-income earners. For BC, several tax increases introduced in 1993 were aimed at high-income earners (De Clercy, 2001).

De Clercy (2001) argues that the success of Alberta and Saskatchewan in reducing their deficits and creating surpluses involved the following of clear, strategic and expeditious plans, including the Deficit Elimination Act in Alberta and the Debt Management Plan in Saskatchewan. In BC, the development of a plan to direct the policies of the Harcourt and Clark governments was less comprehensive and there was less momentum of change achieved. In terms of media coverage, Romanow's approach received better press but it was Alberta that received American praise for its expenditure reduction approach. In the *Wall Street Journal* and the *The New York Times*, Alberta was applauded for the performance of its economy and reduction in unemployment and the government's share of Alberta's GDP. *The New York Times* reported: "Alberta is now the model for other provincial governments and the federal government, which also face budget problems" (cited in, Cooper and Mebs, 2000: 6).

Social assistance reform in the western provinces was part of this much larger concern with provincial deficits. However, each province incorporated this deficit-reduction strategy differently. For example, BC adopted the unsuccessful strategy of growing out of their deficit by increasing spending and raising revenue. The restructuring of social assistance programming did not occur until the end of 1995, with the introduction of *BC Benefits*. In contrast, Alberta was the first province in the 1990s to actually act upon critiques that pointed to the 'crisis' of the welfare state by dramatically reducing social spending on social programs (Cooper and Mebs, 2000). Saskatchewan, however, took a much more middle-of-the-road approach. Saskatchewan adopted a balanced approach of both raising revenue and reducing spending (Boothe 2001; De Clercy 2001). Restructuring of social assistance did not actually occur until three years after the province was able to achieve budget surplus.

Although each province did not immediately and simultaneously take up social assistance reform as a means to reduce their deficits, all three western provinces did undertake deficit reduction strategies at the same time. Indeed, for Boothe and Reid (2001), such actions suggested a natural, social science experiment by which to trace the implications of their strategies over time. With respect to this study of provincial reforms, citing provincial economic deficits as a driver of social assistance reform particularly points to how the corresponding crisis of the larger welfare state was addressed in the policy agendas of each province. Moreover, Cooper and Mebs (2000) explain that the achievement of budgetary surplus in different ways in Alberta and Saskatchewan mean that all other provinces, and even the Government of Canada, had the option of following either approach in their implementation of reduction strategies. What will become apparent in Chapter 3 is that Alberta paved the way for reform for the other western provinces.

Spikes in Social Assistance Caseloads

A second factor behind social assistance reform in the western provinces was the increase in caseloads during the 1990s, which was due in part to the recession during the beginning of this decade (Sceviour and Finnie 2004). With respect to national trends, Sceviour and Finnie (2004) explain that single individuals and couples with and without children experienced peak usage of social assistance in 1993. Lone mother families' reliance on social assistance peaked in 1995. From 1995 onward, all groups experienced a steady decline in caseloads regardless of family structure. Turning to provincial trends, they observe that every Canadian province experienced a spike in their social assistance rates between 1992 and 1993.

The ministry of social services annual reports confirm the importance of increased caseloads for the adoption of reform strategies in both BC and Alberta, and to a lesser extent in Saskatchewan. BC caseloads increased until 1995, at which time the ministry introduced its first wave of reforms in the form of *BC Benefits*, a direct response to greater usage of assistance (British Columbia Ministry of Social Services 1996). In Alberta, the record numbers of individuals on assistance in 1992/93 were a primary reason for the introduction of reforms to *Supports for Independence* in 1993 (Alberta Family and Social Services 1993). In contrast, in Saskatchewan, caseloads peaked in 1994 and thereafter declined as a result of gradual initiatives begun as part of *Building Independence*, a series of programs for persons on social assistance that was completely established by 1998 (Saskatchewan Social Services 1999). Compared to all Canadian provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan actually had the lowest rate of individuals on social assistance in the early 1990s (Roy 2004).

From CAP to CHST

The final factor was the replacement of CAP with CHST, a change that took place at the federal level but had implications for the provinces' management of their social assistance programs. An accompanying supplementary paper to the 1994 Social Security Review, *Reforming the Canada Assistance Plan* foreshadowed possible reform strategies. Two goals were stated as driving the need for change: 1) remove disincentives to work among recipients of social assistance; and 2) reduce child poverty (Canada 1994a). Several other reasons were cited as suggesting the need to reform CAP: growing caseloads; the realization that many on assistance are employable but do not have the levels of education and training necessary to find good jobs; loss of benefits upon leaving assistance, meaning some are worse off than when they were on assistance; special challenges faced by lone mothers, such as child care; and the provinces' primary provision of basic income support rather than employment and training (Canada 1994a: 9-14).

The central reason for considering reform to CAP was to move employable persons off assistance. Although the federal and provincial governments were legally bound to cost sharing of provincial assistance programs, this sharing of funding did not always occur smoothly, due in part to the spikes in social assistance caseloads, the recession, and the federal deficit and emerging provincial deficits. Federal government concerns over managing the increased costs of social assistance programs were also matched with provincial government frustration at not being permitted to experiment with delivery and eligibility rules under CAP's conditions (Baker and Tippin 1999). Some negotiations were therefore made under CAP. For example, in 1985 an agreement between the federal, Conservative government and the provinces enabled provinces to add work incentives into their social assistance programs under CAP; the federal government committed money to skills training through the Canada Job Strategy program. Between 1990 and 1995, a 5 percent ceiling on CAP was introduced in the wealthiest provinces (Ontario, BC, and Alberta). Battle (1998: 329) argues that this 'cap on CAP' signalled the end to Ottawa's 'blank cheque' for social service costs. And, as Baker and Tippin (1999) explain, this off-loading of spending to these three provinces further exacerbated divisions between all provinces. For example, in BC over 70% of the ministry budget was spent on social assistance instead of the original 50%. Nonetheless, this move to further reduce expenditures occurred at an opportune time. An estimated $5.8 billion was saved in the years 1990 to 1994 just as the most serious recession to hit Canada since the 1930s occurred (Battle, 1998).

The major change to social welfare funding occurred when the Liberal government replaced CAP and the Established Programs Financing (EPF) (the agency responsible for shared provincial and federal costs for health and education) with the CHST in 1995. This was not entirely unexpected since a discussion of the option of a new block-funding approach for longer-term reform, and whether or not it should uphold the same principles for the administration of programs as in CAP, constituted the bulk of the final chapter of *Reforming the Canada Assistance Plan* (Canada 1994a).

Consisting of block funding, the CHST removes federal responsibility for full cost sharing with provinces and instead specifically encourages provincial autonomy in spending on health, post-secondary education and social assistance programs but at the cost of reduced government transfers. In its first two years, the CHST resulted in $7 billion cut from all total transfer payments made to the provinces (Battle, 1998). The replacement of CAP with CHST can also be understood as systemic retrenchment, which refers to government endorsement of institutional and fiscal efforts to alter and weaken the policy context (Rice and Prince, 2000).

Unlike CAP, the CHST does not protect citizens' rights (Reichwein 2002). In particular, provinces are not obligated to recognize four of the five rights citizens had under CAP, especially citizens' rights to support when in need and their protection from the imposition of mandatory employability programming. CHST only upholds the requirement that provinces cannot impose minimum residency requirements for access to social assistance (Battle and Torjman 1995). This erosion of social responsibility for citizens occurred, then, at the same time that provinces could not rely on the federal government to alleviate pressures they experienced in times of recession, such as rising social assistance caseloads because of tighter eligibility restrictions for EI (Battle, 1998). With the loss of CAP, provinces were no longer entitled to federal cyclical protection and must cope with these pressures entirely on their own.

According to Courchene (1997: 16), the existence of CHST exemplifies the chosen government agenda of decentralization of powers and a greater reliance on markets. Battle and Torjman (1995: 408) go so far as to cite the CHST as "…a watershed in the history of social policy" since it signifies a withdrawal of federal dollars and presence from the funding of provincial social welfare programs. Eight years ago, Battle

(1998) postulated that since social assistance, health and higher education ministries must compete for fewer funds under CHST, it is social assistance that:

> …likely stands to lose the most, especially when the economy worsens. The provinces always find it much easier politically to cut welfare, a program of ill repute amongst a large part of the electorate, than universal health care which remains the most cherished and popular social program (Battle, 1998: 31).

The CHST fits well with neo-liberal ideology because it has enabled provincial governments to restructure their own social programs in pursuit of greater economic autonomy (Baker, 1997). The restructuring of the welfare state both federally and provincially, however, has involved much more than the scaling back of social programs like social assistance. It has also involved the scaling back of social supports between paid work and social assistance, such as the dramatic reforms that resulted in the newer, stricter employment insurance program in the 1990s. Of most concern in this study is how restructuring involves the scaling back of the 'social' contract that made individuals' social citizenship rights to income support in times of need possible. One less seen outcome of restructuring at the federal and provincial levels of government overall is the concurrent, silent transformation in how policy makers conceptualize individuals' social citizenship rights or entitlements to income support.

Making Sense of "Social Citizenship Rights"

Much of the difficulty in arguing that welfare state restructuring has been accompanied by a corresponding transformation in policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights, especially with regard to social assistance policy, is due to the absence of a widely agreed upon definition of social citizenship rights (Dwyer 2004; White and

Donoghue 2003). Despite this absence, many feminist researchers follow T.H. Marshall's classic theorizing of the evolution of citizenship in welfare states, even when they critique some of its problems and propose new theoretical insights (Dwyer 2004). Marshall's approach provides the basis upon which to argue that the post-war welfare state was designed with an underlying social contract that conceptualized and prioritized citizens' collective entitlements to risk insurance and/or social support on the basis of need. His theorization also provides the ability to further argue that, in contrast, the welfare state of the contemporary risk society is characterized by an attenuation of entitlement. This is suggested by cuts to benefits and services provided and the implementation of a market orientation to the management of persons on social assistance.

In his classic approach, Marshall (1963) argued that citizenship is a status that members of a community hold; all members also have certain rights and duties. Ideally, individuals' actions should convey a sense of responsibility to the welfare of the community as a whole. For Marshall, the rights of citizens gradually evolved over time. Throughout the 18th century to the 20th century, citizenship rights in the form of civil, political, and social rights were granted to individuals. Civil rights constituted individual freedoms (e.g. the right to work, the right to justice, freedom of speech) that emerged in the 18th century and were assumed to be held by all members of society. While in the 19th century, political rights were viewed as an extension of civil rights, it was in the 20th century that new segments of the population were granted the right to exercise political power. For example, in Canada, both women and men had the right to participate in the democratic process through election and voting by the mid-20th century. It was in the 20th century that social rights also emerged, their source being primarily membership in local communities and functional associations. As Marshall (1963: 74) argues, social rights constitute the whole range, from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share in the collective culture of society, especially in terms of living according to the standards of society. Marshall identified education and social services as the institutions that provide this social element of citizenship.

Marshall, however, did not view social citizenship rights as paving the way for the end of capitalist society. Instead, he saw them as consistent with the inequalities created by capitalism. Citizenship rights as initially developed actually permitted the functioning of the capitalist economy. According to Marshall, status differences are tolerable in a society characterized by democratic citizenship if they occur in a population with a single civilization and are not the expression of hereditary privilege; inequalities were acceptable if an *equality of citizenship* was recognized. Marshall even articulated citizenship as a status involving not just rights but responsibilities as well. He perceived individuals to have citizenship duties of working, and obeying and upholding the law in capitalist society. According to Dwyer (2004), Marshall was more concerned with outlining rights rather than responsibilities in his citizenship theory. For Marshall, it is the promotion of citizenship that can hold in check market-generated, class-based inequalities (Dwyer 2004).

In 1990, Esping-Anderson observed that the architecture of modern welfare states is based on this core idea of social citizenship, albeit in varying degrees. He maintained that the granting of rights on the basis of citizenship, instead of on the basis of performance, involved "...a de-commodification of the status of individuals vis-à-vis the market" (Esping-Andersen 1990: 21).[14] According to Esping-Anderson (1990), Canada, Australia and the U.S. are liberal welfare-state regimes.[15] The state, market, family, and volunteer sector or community are all key players in the design of welfare state architecture. Following Marshall, Esping-Anderson recognizes that social citizenship rights in liberal welfare-state regimes do not eliminate inequalities. The welfare state can actually reproduce social stratification through prioritization of the market, as suggested by means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, and social insurance plans that provide benefits to citizens who pass strict eligibility criteria.[16] This prioritization of the market in assessing individuals' entitlements to support can curtail the de-commodifiying effect of citizenship rights. Esping-Anderson argues, however, that corresponding to the post-war social contract, social citizenship rights to support were largely perceived to be attached to demonstrable need, not work performance. Like Marshall, Esping-Anderson recognized the conditional nature of social rights and observed that conditions of entitlement are dependent on the social security arrangement of a welfare state. In Canada, at least as initially conceived in social policy, *need* was primarily this condition of entitlement. In contemporary society, social citizenship rights do not eliminate class and status inequalities in society but still do have the potential to dampen individuals' negative experiences of these inequalities if they do represent a relationship between individuals and the state that is not conditional, contractual or tied to the market (Benoit 2000).

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[14] De-commodification occurs when a service is rendered as a right so that a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market. With de-commodification, the emphasis on labour as the only means to financial security is weakened and an emphasis on citizenship as an alternative route is strengthened (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

[15] The term 'welfare-state regime' captures how the relationship between the state and the economy is characterised by inter-related legal and organizational institutes and structures (e.g. policy, programs) all aimed at promoting people's welfare (Goodin et al., 1995, cited in Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003).

[16] Means-tests consist of assessing the income and total assets of an individual in order to determine if they should be granted government income support.

Jenson and Sineau (2001) take up Marshall's sense of evolution and transformation in citizenship in their argument that nation-states can be categorized over time not just according to their state architecture, as done by Esping-Anderson, but also in their conceptualization of citizen entitlement. Jenson and Sineau (2001: 8) advance the concept of a citizenship regime, which refers to the institutional arrangements, rules and understandings that guide policy decisions and expenditures, state and citizen engagement in problem definitions, and claims-making by citizens. What they add to the earlier discussion of the post-war social contract and Esping-Anderson's categorization of welfare-states is the specific consideration of how citizenship identities are encoded as either the 'model citizen' *versus* the non-citizen, and how a regime may be reproduced as a result of social, economic and political relations or dramatically change as a result of crisis (Jenson and Sineau 2001).

In other works, Jenson builds still further upon the notion of citizenship regimes and demonstrates that there have been corresponding shifts in citizenship regimes with the evolution of citizens' rights as conceptualized in social policy (see, for example, Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003). Indeed, changes in citizenship regimes involve corresponding changes in abstract social values and especially the actions and behaviours of policy makers and politicians on behalf of these values. In the next section, I examine these shifts in citizenship regimes and emphasize the importance of transforming policy paradigms in order for new regimes to originate.

Shifting Citizenship Rights Regimes, Policy Paradigms, and the Risk Society

Citizenship regimes cannot exist unless a guiding policy paradigm is in place. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Thomas Kuhn (1962) argues that paradigms exist because, in general, there is a collective commitment to them among a scientific community.[17] Changes in paradigms, however, are brought about by anomalies or discoveries that prompt recognition that the paradigm is not functioning adequately and in a state of crisis. This state of crisis is required prior to the transformation of a paradigm. Further, a paradigm shift is only possible when there is consensus within the community that it is necessary and an alternative candidate, a new paradigm, is available to replace it. For the new paradigm to emerge successfully, there are often proponents who advocate how the new paradigm can correct for the problems that led the original paradigm to the crisis in the first place. The choice among new successive paradigms is a function of values. When Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts is applied to the evolution of citizenship regimes, it is possible to see that there has indeed been a transformation in how individuals' social citizenship rights are conceptualized in social policy, especially social assistance policy.

The central idea of the *social rights citizenship regime* in immediate post-war Canada was that everyone should be treated as full and equal members of society. While participation in the labour market was understood to be an individual's best form of welfare (Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003), equality and justice were central values. Building on the ideas of the social contract, post-war citizenship meant social programs framed in the language of universalism (Banting 1987; Brodie 2002). Benefits in the form of Old Age Security, Family Allowances, and Medicare, in their initial design, signified a sense of universal entitlement (Rice and Prince 2000) and promised income security against life risks (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003). Although a sense of universalism was limited in other social programs, including Unemployment Insurance and CAP, all programs acted together as temporary 'safety nets' (Jenson 2001).

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[17] This consensus does mean that every person who identifies with the paradigm has to have similar values and assumptions when approaching a problem of interest.

Moreover, according to Armitage (1988), post-war benefits were provided to persons on the basis of some common factor they were all perceived to share. Social policies, although directed at the individual, were a means to create a common collective ground among citizens regardless of their ethnic, class or national backgrounds (Brodie 2002; White 2003). The post-war citizenship regime was based on values of individualism and social solidarity simultaneously (Jenson 2001). By engaging all citizens in a collective project aimed at citizen equality and social progress, social citizenship rights promised the formation of social solidarity and social justice (albeit limited) in capitalist society (Brodie 2002).

The social rights citizenship regime (or social contract) was a result of consensus among the state, capitalists and workers (Brown and Lauder, 2001). The period from the 1940s to late 1960s suggests this consensus about social security was not always uniform; politicians, policy makers, and labour had different values and beliefs for pursuing or requesting minor adjustments to it. Nonetheless, as illustrated earlier, it was not until the 1970s that the "crisis" of the welfare state became a driving force in policy circles. The emerging neo-liberal ideology created support for the idea that something had to be done to prevent social programs from draining the public purse. This prompted the retrenchment of the welfare state; social spending was increasingly interpreted as in direct conflict with economic prosperity (Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003). Not surprisingly, the retrenchment of the welfare state also altered the citizenship regime and the social programs it encapsulated.

In particular, it was in the period of crisis that the interest in full employment gradually gave over to interest in the market as a determinant of the level of unemployment and post-war citizenship was increasingly faulted for being too passive and for promoting individuals' lack of political and economic engagement or dependency (Jenson and Papillon 2001). The idea that social citizenship created 'irresponsible citizens' resonated most with right-wing politicians and parties and led to the conclusion that a responsibility dimension of citizenship must be re-introduced. In more recent years, the subsequent abandonment of the Keynesian social contract meant social policy has been more steadily driven by economic policy (Baker 1997). In essence, the crisis of the welfare state created a shift in the guiding policy paradigm or, as Rice and Prince (2000) state it, spurred on paradigmatic retrenchment of the welfare state. The initial social security approach to social policy has since been replaced by a newer social investment approach (Myles and Street, 1994, cited in Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003).

This shift in paradigm/regime cannot be attributed to the national context alone. As Kuhn reminds us, a new paradigm must be ready to replace the old one. Such a paradigm was gaining much attention internationally. Although the idea of investment had been burgeoning in Canadian policy circles in the mid-1990s, the term "social investment state" originated with Anthony Giddens' conceptualization of the Third Way (Giddens 1998). The Third Way refers to Giddens' interest in carving out an alternative, middle approach to old style social democracy and neo-liberalism, neither of which he sees as functioning in a manner that benefits citizens of capitalist nation-states. The Third Way is characterized by an interest in human capital, partnerships and community. Giddens argues that government must have a role to play by investing in human resources and infrastructure in order to develop an entrepreneurial culture.

The Third Way has had incredible influence on social policy design in Westernized nation-states, especially the U.S. and the UK. It has become a predominantly accepted way of matching economic and social policy concerns in a globalizing society. Moreover, Giddens' offering of the Third Way connects directly to his and Beck's theorization of the risk society and especially the individualization thesis (Piper 2000). This becomes apparent when comparisons are drawn between the new citizenship regime that Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003) argue has emerged in Canada and Third Way principles.

In the *social investment citizenship regime* of Canadian society, the labour market is still considered the major source of welfare. However, where the social rights citizenship regime was concerned with providing access to a safety net, the social investment regime is concerned with state supplementation of individuals' low wages (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003: 89). Life-risks are no longer perceived to be unemployment, old age, or child-bearing. Instead, the major risks for individuals in contemporary society is a lack of skills suitable for the global labour market, social exclusion in the form of long-term poverty, and family breakdown. Indeed, it is in *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* that Giddens calls for a shift in the relationship between risk and security. The welfare state in contemporary society must produce 'responsible risk takers' (Giddens 1998).

Whereas the welfare state of the social citizenship rights regime *protected* people from the market, then, the social investment regime will *integrate* people into the market. The social investment citizenship regime will harness the positive aspects of risk by providing resources, including work/education programs and available child care, for risk taking. Put differently, the form of security promised is not a net but a trampoline (Saint-Martin 2000, cited in White 2003; Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003). Policy provisions are for the short-term and spring individuals back into the labour market as soon as possible. The surest forms of security are not residual safety nets but investments in human capital and life-long learning, principles already identified much earlier (see Chapter 1) as characteristic of the risk society.

Indeed, the emphasis on investment is grounded in the risks associated with global economic competition. Since job security is scarce, flexibility and individual responsibility in the modernizing and increasingly technological labour market must be prioritized. Finally, unlike the social rights citizenship regime, the goal of social policy in the investment regime is to fight against social exclusion rather than for social justice and equality (Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003). Giddens (1998) does recognize that what must be balanced against the increased emphasis on the individual in the global economy is a concern with the more historical themes of social responsibility and mutual obligation. However, since collectivism is often an antiquated notion in current capitalist societies, Third Way politics redefines citizens' rights and responsibilities – there are 'no rights *without* responsibilities' (Giddens 1998: 65, italics added).

An excellent illustration of Canada's own social investment approach is provided by Brodie's (2002) discourse analysis of Speeches from the Throne in the 1990s. Brodie

(2002) shows how the federal government links Canadian identity and unity to the demands of the economy under the term "the Canadian Way." The throne speech of 2001 defined the Canadian Way as the recognition that 'economic and social success must be pursued together' (Speech from the Throne, January 30, 2001: 10, cited in Brodie 2002: 391). In Canada, investment in social and human capital is understood to produce autonomous, responsible and active citizens who are attached to global markets (Brodie 2002; White 2003). Giddens' (1998) own discussions of the desirability of a social investment state stress the importance of individuals' involvement in the labour market to realize inclusion as a central policy goal.

To summarize, restructuring of the welfare state has been accompanied by a shift from a social citizenship rights regime to a social investment citizenship regime. This social investment citizenship regime has been heavily influenced by Giddens' Third Way thinking and is illustrative of the paramount role of individualization in the risk society. Thus, individuals' social citizenship relationships with social policy in the risk society are far different than they were within the initial post-war social contract of the welfare state. It is crucial to stress this connection between the social investment citizenship regime and the risk society here because it is a central point that will be returned to throughout the remainder of this study. Readers are cautioned that when reference is made to the social investment citizenship regime alone, reference to its situation with a broader, macro-level understanding of the risk society is assumed.

Nonetheless, public sentiment seems to suggest that an interest in collective, social security has not dissipated amongst the Canadian public and absolute elimination of the social safety net is unacceptable to many. As Mendelsohn (2002: 2) finds, citizens favour the expansion of Canada's role in the global economy but believe that decisions about social spending and the welfare state should remain domestic decisions.[18] For citizens, top policy priorities include health care, education, unemployment, and poverty. Canadians are more likely to say that more generous social programs are a greater priority than preventing the government from interfering with the free market, although this is not the same as support for statist solutions (Mendelsohn 2002). This public sentiment that social programs are important and should be maintained is a core reason that they have not been absolutely dismantled. The more preferred solution, keeping with the social investment citizenship regime, is to use social programs to make individuals 'employable' (Drache, 1994) and, moreover, thereby reduce individuals' use of social programs.

Employability in Social Assistance and Emerging Fault Lines

The emergence of the new catch-phrase 'no rights without responsibilities' is a crucial starting point for understanding how citizens' entitlements are conceptualized differently in the new global order of Canadian society. Dwyer (2002: 274) observes that in the UK, the initial design of the post-war welfare state did centre on balancing rights with responsibilities, much like it did in Canada. Dwyer's concern is that the New Labour agenda now places more emphasis on the responsibilities of citizens rather than their rights within welfare policy. He argues that the contemporary responsibilities of citizens are upheld by a new citizenship principle – conditionality. This conditionality is enforced by making eligibility to public security entitlements dependent on individuals' fulfilling *compulsory* duties or patterns of behaviour. Because citizenship is more identified with participation in a social community rather than simply membership, a primary effect of this shift is to define work as the central condition of citizenship (Jenson 2001; Shaver 2001). Increasingly, this is the case in Canada, where social rights to social assistance are matched with an emphasis on citizen responsibility to work or their 'employability.'[19]

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[18] Mendelsohn (2002:2) undertook a comprehensive search of the results of commercial, academic, research institute, and government public opinion surveys on topics related to the social contract (e.g. the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the obligations of governments to citizens, and desired trade-off between individual, market-based values and the collective provision of public goods).

The historically and culturally entrenched stigma surrounding those on assistance plays a large role in the acceptance of 'employability' as a condition of individuals' receipt of assistance. As noted above, the neo-conservative argument to restructure the welfare state partially centred on the statement that the welfare state was a producer of dependency.[20] The welfare state was faulted as 'passive' in its provision of entitlements on the basis of need, a diagnosis that was paralleled with stereotyping of those on assistance as 'lazy' and/or 'taking advantage.' It has therefore become increasingly acceptable to focus on an individual's personal characteristics as the reason why they cannot find or keep work (Baker, 1997). This focus on the individual fits well with the social investment interest in developing human capital through job search skills or education improvement. And, emphasizing employability turns 'passive' welfare into 'active' welfare.

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[19] While Dwyer's work on welfare reform in the UK is referred to because of the applicability of his 'creeping conditionality' concept to the Canadian experience, readers are cautioned to recognize that there are still other important differences between welfare/social assistance reforms in the UK and Canada. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to review them in detail, it is noted that the UK and Canada have not shared the same reform trajectory and that there are also important gendered differences between them. For example, British mothers are not subject to the same employability expectations as Canadian mothers on income assistance. The actual expectations of Canadian mothers are discussed in Chapter 3.

[20] It is important to realize that this notion of 'dependency' is relatively new. Tracing the evolution of the term from pre-industrial society to contemporary society, Fraser and Gordon (1994) observe that whereas dependency simply referred to a social relation (e.g. a child was dependent on its mother for care) in pre-industrial society, it became associated with an individual character trait in industrializing society. Its moral/psychological meaning is now well embedded within contemporary culture. Moreover, dependency has increasingly pathological connotations – individuals who do not work and are dependent on state support are incompetent, deviant and abnormal (Fraser and Gordon 1994).

Since the form of a social welfare institution is tied to economic ideology, Armitage (1988) states that the values of economic self-reliance and independence are therefore entrenched within past and present social policy. Producing skilled citizens capable of participating in the labour market is an aspiration that makes common sense in a capitalist society. Nonetheless, one of the major contentions of this study is that it is how this 'employability' is being created and administered in social assistance that is problematic, especially because of the influence of neo-liberal ideology. For example, the goal of moving people into the labour market through investing in their human capital has not been matched with a corresponding goal of constructing a labour market that accepts them (Baker, 1997). Structural barriers within the context of the labour market (e.g. low wage jobs, limited job security, few benefits) are less recognized as a major reason why many find it difficult to leave assistance.

Moreover, there are still other fault lines associated with an emphasis on 'employability' that are emerging in tandem with political and policy efforts to foster the social investment regime.[21] It is important to note some of these fault lines and what other researchers say about them because the very idea of fault lines points to some problems that have implications for an examination of social assistance reform.

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[21] Fault lines is a term used to refer to phenomenon that contradict the social investment citizenship regime's goal of producing active, autonomous citizens capable of re-connecting to the labour market at will or in response to unemployment risks they may experience. Stated another way, they can be thought as 'cracks within the structure(s)' of the risk society and, which, subsequently contradict some of the assumptions and promises upon which it rests.

The most glaring of the fault lines is the existence of poverty. Parents and children on social assistance are still poor. The National Council of Welfare shows that in 2003, parents' total assistance incomes, including national child benefits, provincial benefits, GST credit, were not enough to pull lone parent families with one child or two parent families with two children above the poverty line (National Council of Welfare 2004a). Although the Canadian House of Commons resolved in 1989 to end child poverty by the year 2000, this has not occurred. Instead, the rate of child poverty spiked in 2002 (Campaign 2000 2004). Following five years of decline, the national child poverty rate jumped in 2002 to 15.6%, a rate higher than in was in 1989 (14.9%). Children from lone mother families are increasingly at risk of economic insecurity; the child poverty rate for lone mother families was 51.6% in 2002 compared to 45% in 2001.[22]

Two of the three western provinces have 2002 child poverty rates higher than the national average. British Columbia's rate of 19.6% is followed by Saskatchewan's rate of 18.7%. Of the three, Alberta has the lowest rate at 13.3% (Campaign 2000 2004). It is this poverty that demonstrates that marginalized groups are socially excluded from the broader fabric of Canadian society despite the federal and provincial government's recognition of this as a social problem demanding attention in the mid 1990s (McDaniel 2003; Stanley 2003; Williams 2004). The 'creeping conditionality' (Dwyer, 2002: 88) in social programming, especially social assistance programming, coupled with dependency rhetoric, exacerbates social divisions amongst citizens. Placing blame upon individuals for being on assistance pits them against others – assistance recipients *versus* the working poor; assistance recipients *versus* the well off or rich; temporary assistance recipients

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[22] The child poverty rate is calculated by considering those children under 18 who live in families whose total income before taxes falls below the LICOs (Campaign 2000, 2004).

versus continuous/disability assistance recipients. Once individuals are increasingly perceived as solely responsible for their own welfare and those who are outside of the labour market are seen as 'drains on the public purse,' individual responsibility undermines social responsibility (Brodie, 2002; Drache, 1994).

A decade ago, Drache (1994) hypothesized that with an increased emphasis on employability, a 'work ethic state' would replace the welfare state. His prediction has merit today. This is because another major fault line of the social investment citizenship regime is that it makes practices like workfare normative. Since policy under this regime is productive rather than maintenance oriented, Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003) argue that this encourages the increased targeting of individuals who are not working for social programs designed to induce, or forcefully encourage with conditions, their participation in the labour market. Moreover, the interest in making social assistance recipients employable has been replaced with an interest in encouraging all able-bodied persons to work, such as by restricting eligibility for EI (Jenson and Papillon, 2001).This emphasis on the attachment of conditions to rights is entrenched in social assistance policies (White 2003), to the point that conditions often usurp rights. Individuals are no longer entitled to assistance on the basis of need. Their receipt of benefits is contingent on their employability efforts. Thus, it is not surprising that Canadian programs designed to increase individuals' employability are often termed 'welfare-to-work.'

The social investment citizenship regime's emphasis on consumption in a market society and its effect of familializing care suggests a third fault line. The emphasis on the citizen-consumer is evident in the 'making work pay' rhetoric surrounding the erosion of entitlement in social assistance policies. Baker (1997) summarizes the implications of this emphasis on consumers for family care relations:

> The notion of collectivity and collective interest – inherent within Canada's major social programs – is being replaced by the neoliberal concept that citizens are individual 'consumers' with no inherent claims on government funds or support. Consumers are told that they should look to non-state mechanism of support (such as family, community and voluntary organizations) in the future rather than to government (Baker, 1997: 18).

The restructuring trend of displacing the power of the government through decentralization and privatization and replacing it with a call to rely upon other non-state entities (e.g. family members, privatized health clinics) means that individuals turn to them for their welfare, at least those individuals fortunate enough to have extensive support networks or high incomes.

The potential existence of a fourth fault line is the main focus of the remainder of this study. It is predicted that the differential experiences of male and female parents on social assistance, associated with the emergence of employability as a condition of benefit receipt in the social investment citizenship regime, is this final fault-line. Indeed, the majority of Chapter 2 thus far has been deliberately gender-blind. This is because it is in the next three sections of this chapter that I outline how the theoretical framework, research questions, and methodology of this study correct for this oversight.

Theoretical Framework: Gendering Risk and Citizenship

Thus far, it is apparent that three inter-related theoretical frameworks drive this examination of social assistance reform in the three western provinces: risk society theory, feminist research on citizenship, and the sociological interest in the structure/agency dialectic. I contend that applying the theoretical perspective of gender as a social structure over and above each of these areas of interest is the best way to examine the de/re-gendered transformation of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance and how the emphasis on their employability affects and/or relates to their market and family care relations. In doing so, I do not discount the contributions to thinking about gender that theorists of the risk society and feminist critiques of citizenship have offered.

For example, Beck (1992) acknowledges that the risk society demands individuals' mobility without recognition of personal constraints. Essentially, the market-orientation to the risk society implies a society without families and children or what I would term a de-gendering of the risk society. According to Beck (1992: 116): "The market subject is ultimately the single individual, 'unhindered' by a relationship, marriage or family." It can be predicted that when such a conceptualization of the gender neutral market citizen is upheld in social assistance policies in the western provinces, there will be negative implications for low-income parents' lives. Beck also discusses gender with respect to his assertion that aside from individualization, 'reflexive modernization' characterizes the risk society. For example, reflexive modernization is suggested by how gender-specific divisions are contested and rebelled against in contemporary society at the same time that there are taboos placed on marriage and parenthood, and public outcry over the dissolution of family morals.[23] Thus, while women's increased labour force participation is largely due to inter-related demographic and economic changes (e.g. lower fertility rates and the erosion of the family wage) (Cass

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[23] In the most recent election of the U.S. President George Bush, his returning election platform included voicing concern over the dissolution of family morals and values and, thus, a call to return to the traditional family.

1981), remnants of ideologies surrounding women's proper work roles in classical industrial society remain. This understanding of reflexive modernization hints at how traditional, gender ideology may contradict the actual everyday experiences of women and men in the risk society.

Giddens' gendered explorations tend to be focused on changes in intimate relations (sexual and gender relations) over time. In *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), he observes a contemporary tendency for individuals to engage in more reflexive, conditional and revisable love relationships (Bryant and Jary 2001: 27). Among other things, he observes the decline in traditional family and gendered roles and the re-making of intimate relationships so that they are consistent with individuals' narratives of self. Giddens' work points to the active agency parents have in creating their everyday family realities on social assistance.

Since the majority of this study is devoted to gendering parents' entitlement relationships with social assistance policy, only brief mention of the insights of feminist researchers are made here. Specifically, feminist research on citizenship has made two significant contributions that are relevant to this study. First, feminist researchers have showed how the effects of a market orientation to social policy today are differently experienced by women and men (Benoit 2000; Brodie 1997; Evans 1996; O'Connor et al. 1999). Second, feminist research has shown that in the post-war and contemporary welfare state full citizenship status has always been elusive for women compared to men (Baines 1996; McDaniel 2002; Walby 1997).

Interest in the structure/agency dialectic of parents' citizenship experiences on social assistance is grounded in Giddens's structuration theory. According to Giddens

(1976: 161, cited in Bryant and Jary 2001: 11), "social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution." Structures are produced through individuals' actions or agency and yet the reflexivity and interpretations individuals engage in are shaped by structures (Risman 1998) – the *duality* or *dialectic* of structure. Hence, through their actions individuals re-create the structures and practice that can, in turn, constrain those actions (Wallace and Wolf 1995).

In this study, I build and improve upon the insights from each of these theoretical frameworks by adopting the over-arching theoretical perspective of gender as a social structure (see, for example Connell 1987; Risman 1998). When gender is viewed as a social structure, it is:

> …not simply masculine or feminine attributes assigned to biological sex but…a mechanism or structure made up of the malleable patterns of behaviour amongst individuals. The malleability of gender as a social structure is suggested by the changing nature of its meaning and the implications of it dependent upon human agency, context, space and time (Gazso 2004: 452).

This approach actually expands upon Giddens's structuration theory in a gendered way. Within the gender structure, social processes create social order and social difference between women and men through the shaping/reshaping and sanctioning/condoning of behaviour at different levels (Gazso, 2004): ideological, institutional, interactional, individual.

Applying the theoretical perspective of gender as a social structure to an analysis of parents' citizenship relationships with social assistance policy in the risk society suggests several interesting directions this study can take. Theorizing at the *ideological* level of the gender structure is comparable to Beck's interest in the connection between gender and reflexive modernizaton. It requires examining how systems of meaning infiltrate social assistance policy and influence women and men's actions and behaviours in their everyday entitlement relations. Theorizing gender at the *institutional* level requires examining how gender is embedded within the institution of social assistance policy and, thus, creates and upholds different expectations for women and men's employability efforts, such as with regard to when they should seek work and when they are permitted to care for children. This level of theorizing connects to Beck's argument that excessive individualism, such as individuals' responsibility for their labour market choices, is institutionalized in welfare state policy in the risk society (Piper 2000).

The *interactional* level of gender as a social structure refers to the potential to theorize how parents' everyday interactions with social assistance policy and others further shape their actions and behaviours as gender appropriate. Finally, theorizing the *individual* level of gender as a social structure requires care and attention to how women's and men's interactions with their children or social assistance caseworker and their conceptualization of their entitlement relationships with social assistance policy are informed by their psychological development and internalization of cultural meanings as a result of socialization processes. Each of these final two levels of the gender structure link to Giddens' emphasis on the active agency individuals have in managing and negotiating changes to their intimate relations.

The use of theoretical perspective of gender as a social structure in this analysis of parents' citizenship relationships with social policy is therefore based upon certain assumptions. Parents are understood as active agents in their social realities. They negotiate their interpretations of structural change with other individuals, including family members, and through their individual agency may bring about further change within and outside of their families. Contradictions and tensions that exist and develop within low-income parents' while living on assistance are understood to sometimes clearly relate to the structure and ideologies underpinning social assistance policy, sometimes to intimate inter-relations (or interactions) in the face of change (Giddens 1990), and sometimes both. One final assumption made in this study is that the gendering of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance is not necessarily straightforward. For example, the use of the term de-/re-gendering captures an interest in examining how social assistance policy may appear to be a gender neutral structure because of its emphasis on individuals' potential market participation, but in fact can have very distinctly gendered consequences for parents' entitlement relationships.

The Research Questions

Having outlined gender as a social structure and how it connects to risk society theory, feminist research on citizenship, and the structure/agency dialectic, it is now useful to briefly revisit the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. As noted, the primary guiding research question of this study is: How has the reform of social assistance programs in British Columbia (BC), Alberta and Saskatchewan (1993-2004) similarly or differently involved a gendered transformation of social citizenship rights to social assistance and to what extent are low-income parents' market and family care relations embedded in this transformation?

More specifically, this study is guided by three central research questions that derive from this primary question:

1) How do dominant political/ideological assumptions about market relations and family care relations shape policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance?
2) How are policy shifts in conceptualizing social citizenship rights to social assistance subject to the processes of de-/re-gendering?
3) Do policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance shape and/or conflict with their everyday market relations and family care relations?

A Methodology for Mixing Methods

The research design of this study was based on the assumption that the research questions dictate the appropriate methodological perspective and selection of methods.[24] The specific research questions outlined above were developed to compare and confront government representations of social assistance policy [structure] with the lived experiences of low-income parents [agency] and, thus, have a particular affinity with a mixed methodology strategy.

In order to answer my research questions, I utilized three research methods. I undertook a discourse analysis of annual reports from the ministry of social services and public-use policy documents from BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan to show the political/ideological assumptions about market and family care relations that exist in social assistance policy and program design and therefore impose specific regulations (including gendered ones) on low-income parents' citizenship relationships with social assistance policy (Chapter 3 provides the results of this discourse analysis). These documents consisted of all annual reports from the ministry of social services in each province from 1993 to 2004 and any other in-house or academic discussions that were available to the public in the ministry libraries. I also interviewed 46 parents on social assistance in the three provinces to contrast the assumptions about employability within social assistance policy with their everyday market and family care experiences on assistance.[25] To illustrate rates of social assistance usage and poverty in all three provinces, I incorporate secondary descriptive statistics. Appendix A provides more detail on each of these methods, including the characteristics of the parents I interviewed.

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[24] Here, 'methodology' is understood as a particular perspective or framework and 'methods' are understood as consisting of tools or techniques for collecting data (Letherby 2003).

Summary

In this chapter, the stage has been set for a comparative study of social assistance reform in the three western provinces and how it has involved a de-/re-gendered transformation in parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance. First, a general overview of how the initial system of social security came to be restructured was provided in order to establish the larger macro-societal and economic factors that played a role in social assistance reform in each province. Second, a theoretical understanding of social citizenship rights was reviewed, followed by an analysis of how citizenship regimes have transformed over time and, thus, signified paradigm shifts in the guiding policy agenda. Third, I explained how the theoretical perspective of gender as a social structure enables this examination of gendered shifts in social citizenship rights to social assistance policy. Following this, the research questions of this study were established. Finally, I concluded by explaining the methodological framework of this study. Given this setting of the stage for this study, it is in Chapter 3 that I now turn to how each province engaged in the reform of its social assistance programs.

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[25] The importance of interviewing parents is suggested by the inconsistency with which provinces actually involved persons affected in the design of their reform strategies from 1993 to 2004. From 1993 to 2004, BC's adopted reform strategies were related to the 1995 *Premier's Forum on New Opportunities for Working and Living* and a *Core Services Review* in 2001; both consultations involved ministry personnel. Although Alberta directly involved persons on assistance and other non-government affiliated agencies in its *Low-income Programs Review* in 2001, this was several years after changes made in the early 1990s. In 1996 Saskatchewan released a discussion paper titled *Redesigning Social Assistance: Preparing for the New Century,* proposing redesign as a result of public consultations with outside individuals and groups. This paper paved the way to changes announced in 1998; no other review has taken place at this time.

Chapter 3

The Great West Experiment

In the previous chapter, Boothe and Reid's (2001) analysis of the western provinces was introduced to illustrate how all three adopted deficit reduction strategies – the Great West Experiment – in the space of one year (1993). Although social assistance reform was not expressly addressed by Boothe and Reid (2001), it was noted that it was part of each province's larger concern with reducing deficits or managing budget surpluses in some way. In this chapter, I borrow from their work to establish 1993 as the starting point from which to compare how each province pursued active, employment oriented social assistance policy. Building still further on the observations made in Chapter 2, that social assistance reforms in all three provinces are tied to forces of national and global social change and distinct provincial factors, I first turn to a discussion of the role of provincial party politics in these reforms. In particular, I stress how increasing reliance on neo-liberal ideology, despite party affiliation, is a driving factor behind the chosen welfare-to-work strategies in each of the western provinces. In the latter half of this chapter, I present the results of my discourse analysis of annual reports and public-use policy documents (1993-2004) to answer my first research question: How do dominant political/ideological assumptions about market relations and family care relations shape policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights to social assistance?

The Political Context and Neo-liberalism

The historically shaped political context of each of the three provinces has had considerable influence on how they have pursued entitlement to assistance contingent on parents' employability efforts.[26] It is because this political context is specific to the historical properties of each province that they have not necessarily shared the same strategies of social assistance reform (Wardhaugh 2003) even at times when they have had the same party lead a government (e.g. the New Democratic Party, NDP, in BC and Saskatchewan in the early 1990s).

In the province of BC, post-war politics have been generally characterized by polarization (Blake 1996; Gibbins 2001). Specific dichotomies illustrate the 'sides' of the political debates: such as socialism *versus* free enterprise; unions *versus* capital; interior *versus* the Lower Mainland. Gibbins (2001) credits much of this polarization to the class antagonism surrounding BC's resource-based economy. He also maintains that conflicts surrounding the values and interests of citizens and the province were one primary reason efforts to eliminate budgetary deficits failed in the late 1990s and the early part of the new millennium. The polarized nature of BC politics is evident in the different political and policy agendas proposed and acted upon by the two key parties that have shared the governance of the province over the period 1993 to 2004, the NDP and the Liberal party.

Replacing the Social Credit party in 1991, Mike Harcourt's NDP government pursued the goals of eliminating the economic deficit and protecting the social safety net

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[26] Political context in this study is defined as the micro-level norms and values upheld by governing political parties as well as the macro-level economic and social conditions of a region or province. For a more comprehensive analysis of the influence of political context on the development of social assistance programs in the three provinces pre-/post-1950 until circa 1992, and how different policy goals have influenced reforms over time (beyond this study's interest in the post-1993 emphasis on employability), readers are referred to Boychuk's *Patchworks of Purpose: The Development of Provincial Social Assistance Regimes in Canada* (1998).

(Prince 1996) by increasing expenditures and raising taxes (Boothe 2001; Milke 2001). Aside from pointing to the growing population to justify these strategies, the NDP government also promoted their strategies as responding to the social justice objective of fairness (Boothe, 2001). Higher income earners soon bore the brunt of a greater tax burden to ensure they paid "… their fair share of taxes for a change" (Milke 2001: 14). (2001P. 14)Solving the potential fiscal crisis, however, was more important than the 'fairness' associated with protecting the poor. As suggested by the ministry of social services' introduction of a welfare fraud control program, the NDP was not opposed to targeting those on income assistance as potential abusers of the system. And yet as noted in Chapter 2, the absolute elimination of the deficit was not achieved under the NDP. According to Milke (2001)(2001), the excessive spending and failure to acknowledge the seriousness of the deficit was the party's undoing. In 2001, Gordon Campbell and the Liberal party replaced the NDP government. As a result of several factors, such as the new party's neo-liberal fiscal management approach that included cuts to social assistance and post-secondary education, as well as strong macro-economic conditions, BC achieved a modest surplus in 2004 (CBC News 2004) and a $2.6 billion surplus in 2004/05 (British Columbia Ministry of Finance 2005).

Unlike BC's, Alberta's political context has been fairly stable. The province has had a history of one-party dominance (Hughes et al. 1996; Murphy 1997). From the 1990s onward, successive conservative governments have remained dedicated to opposing socialist notions of collective responsibility and openly receptive to individual responsibility for success and failure in providing for one's self and family (Gibbins, 2001). Ralph Klein even used the history of political dynamics in the province to his advantage in his bid for premiership in 1992. For example, the Social Credit government's emphasis on individual responsibility and a focus on monetary policy during the period of the Depression created an environment receptive for Ralph Klein's much later strategies for reducing debt and deficit in the 1990s. Put simply, in the years preceding Klein where Don Getty was Premier, Albertans had spent more than they earned. Klein's creation of the province in the image of a family, with its attendant moral assumptions (e.g. people do not spend more than they make), helped to ensure public acceptance for his approach to the deficit – spending cuts, privatization, and the reinvention of government (Boothe 2001; Gibbins 2001; Hughes et al. 1996; Stewart 1995). Indeed, one main reason for Klein's restructuring of government over the 1990s and into the new millennium has been the pursuit of economic prosperity for Albertans (Cooper and Mebs 2000). In Alberta, any advantage should be an advantage found in home soil.

With their re-election in 1997, Klein's Conservatives were less interested in introducing fiscal reforms (Cooper and Mebs, 2000). Klein has even achieved the economic prosperity he promised. Alberta's provincial debt was paid off in total in the summer of 2004 and the province experienced increasing revenues due to higher oil prices. In the same year, Klein invited Albertans to participate in the decision of how to spend the provincial surplus. His second successful re-election platform in 2004 was built on many of the values that have sustained conservative governments over time (e.g. keeping Alberta debt free and creating a diversified, globally sensitive economy) (PC Party of Alberta Platform 2004).

While the political context in Alberta has been characterized by one-party dominance and BC has been generally polarized, the Saskatchewan political context has undergone distinct shifts. In Saskatchewan, politics was initially characterized by strong socialist/social justice objectives, first evident with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) (1944-1964) and NDP governments (1971-1982; 1991-2005), and later was characterized by the differing and competing political and policy agendas of Liberal (1964-1971) and Progressive Conservative (1982-1991) governments. Similar to BC, Saskatchewan politics have been characterized by periods of polarization or the "…enduring contest between capitalism and socialism" (Leeson 2001: 4).

Social democratic tendencies were evident in earlier decades in Saskatchewan. Corresponding with the rural, agriculture-based economy, both the CCF and NDP governments prioritized public ownership of resources and utilities and the support of an active government (Gibbins 2001). Considering social assistance, Wardbaugh (2003) argues that during the 1970s the Saskatchewan populace was less inclined to blame recipients for their economic situations and more inclined to point to a variety of structural reasons as contributing to their reliance on state support.

With the election of the Progressive Conservatives in the early 1980s, however, new premier Grant Devine set about reforming the provincial economy. His government actively pursued the downsizing of publicly owned assets, increased privatization, and introduced tax breaks for private companies (Biggs and Stobbe 1991; Leeson 2001; Wardhaugh 2003). Two waves of social assistance reform also occurred under Devine's premiership in the early and mid-1980s, involving such changes as the elimination of household and clothing allowances and reductions to shelter and basic benefit allowances (Riches and Manning 1991; Wardhaugh 2003).

During Devine's period of governance, the belief in individual responsibility for economic situations over-shadowed the earlier, social democratic belief in collective responsibility. The Conservative's strove to reduce government restriction on the entrepreneurial spirit and publicized Saskatchewan as open for business (Biggs and Stobbe 1991). The economic recession of the mid-1980s perhaps initially meant a public more favourable to this government position. Nonetheless, the Conservatives' aggressive dismantling and cutting back of much of the structures and policies the CCF and NDP (under Allan Blakeney) had put into place, as well as their nine consecutive deficit budgets since they took office, all contributed to the party's demise (Stobbe 1991).

In 1991, the NDP under Roy Romanow was re-elected on the basis of several promises, such as its announcement that it would re-instate good social programming and Crown corporations (Leeson, 2001; Warnock, 2004). According to Gibbins (2001), Roy Romanow inherited a political culture that was not amenable to a "slash and burn" approach to the deficit, especially given the Conservative's history of dramatic cuts to social programs and tax perks for the wealthy. A more balanced approach of increased taxes and expenditure cuts was pursued. Over the deficit reduction period (1992-1993, 1995-1996), spending was cut to education and health but actually increased in the area of social services (Boothe 2001). Although the province achieved a budgetary surplus, it has even been criticized by others for being too generous to those on assistance (see, for example, the analysis done by Schafer and Clemens (2002) on behalf of the Fraser Institute). Warnock (2004) maintains that during his premiership, Romanow did not as fully re-integrate social democratic values into his political and policy agenda as it appeared he might. He eventually continued in the policy direction established by the Conservatives, abandoning tax fairness policy and lowering taxes and royalties in the resource sector.

There are two similarities shared among the three provinces despite their different political party affiliations and approaches to spending on social services. First, they all share a common ideological basis to the restructuring of their social assistance programs – neo-liberalism. Second, such an ideological basis provides the justification for the increasing emphasis on employability in social assistance programs post-1990 as well as the eventual rise of the social investment policy paradigm most noticeable from the mid-1990s onward. Globalization and restructuring characteristic of the risk society, and in accordance with neo-liberal ideology at the federal level of Canadian government, has filtered down to the provincial level albeit how this ideology plays out is different in each of these three provinces.

Prince (1996) observes that when the NDP came into power in the early 1990s in BC, the 'new right' ideology of the preceding Social Credit government was replaced by a belief in a strong and secure social security system. At present, with Campbell's Liberal government in power, the neo-liberal ideology of free market democracy has re-gained ascendancy. The government has dedicated itself to expanding the BC economy in an effort to compete in, and contribute to, the global economy. For a much longer period of time, Klein and his Conservatives have drawn heavily on neo-liberal and 'new right' ideology in their politics (Hughes et al. 1996). This is suggested by the importance the government places upon market forces, individualism and a minimal role of the state, and how these factors were used to shape deficit/debt reduction as the primary policy project to be tackled by Albertans.

Although Saskatchewan is still often credited as a leader in social democratic initiatives (e.g. Tommy Douglas initiating Medicare) when compared to other governments, there appears to also be an emerging general consensus that politics here are also undergoing a neo-liberal, rightward shift (Garson and Miazdyck 2004; Wardhaugh 2003). Leeson (2001) maintains that under Devine's rule, the new right in Saskatchewan was only partially successful since a majority of the public still supported the social democratic position that the government should offset the disadvantages characteristic of the hinterland economy. The re-election of the NDP under Romanow, however, has not meant a return to social democratic roots. Beginning with Romanow's premiership, the NDP has shifted increasingly away from its original socialist *versus* capitalist tendencies and toward becoming more conservative and election-oriented. Romanow's replacement in 2001, Lorne Calvert, has continued to pursue characteristically neo-liberal policies and practices that have done little to indicate that he will return to the earlier valuation of collective responsibility (Leeson, 2001; Warnock, 2004).

In all three provinces, the sway of neo-liberal ideology has meant that social assistance programs are no longer primarily based on need. Instead, individuals must meet specific employability obligations to access these programs of 'last resort.' At the broader ideological level of reform, and fitting with the newer social citizenship investment regime, welfare is not viewed as program to help fight poverty but as increasingly a temporary support designed to promote individual self-sufficiency through strategies of labour force attachment (Human Resources Development Canada 2000).

The emphasis on employability *vis-à-vis* neo-liberalism is superficially evident in the policy discourse surrounding the introduction of reform strategies in each of the three provinces. Across Western Canada, the implementation of mandatory education and training programs for social assistance benefit recipients signal the shift toward 'active' welfare-to-work programming or workfare. Alberta was the first of the western provinces, or even all provinces, to bring to fruition this active assistance programming. In Alberta in 1993, the reforms signalled "…the shift from a passive welfare system to an active system focused on helping people regain independence through employment and training" (Alberta Family and Social Services 1994: 5). The recent 2002 reforms oriented toward employability in BC have meant the ministry "has changed the culture of income assistance to one of self-reliance, active participation, and independence" (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2004a: 9). As then Deputy Minister Marry Coell explained, in BC there has been a purposeful shift from "…a culture of entitlement to a culture of employment and self-sufficiency" (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2002a: 2) . In Saskatchewan, its 1998 reform efforts also centre on 'making work pay' via a change in the provision of social assistance policy. "Rather than doing things for citizens, the new strategic approach engages citizens in a 'partnership' for better outcomes" by way of the active *Building Independence* social policy model (Community Resources and Employment 2004: 20).

In the next section, I supplement this evidence of the neo-liberal intentions behind 'active' programming with results from my discourse analysis of all annual reports and public-use policy documents and in-depth interviews with parents. Specifically, I show how parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance on the basis of their employability are also implicitly created across the three provinces according to five dimensions: restriction; enforcement; surveillance; downloading; and de-/re-gendering.[27] Through this analysis I also show other provincial differences in terms of value shifts, and the timing, speed and scope of social assistance reform. Readers are asked to turn to Appendix A to find the methodological details of this discourse analysis and in-depth interviews.

Dimensions in the Creation of Parents' 'Employability'

Prior to delving into a discussion of the five dimensions that create parents' entitlement on the basis of their employability, it is useful to present the results of the first step of my discourse analysis. This first step was undertaken to understand the objectives and timing of reform strategies, the specific changes made to policy and corresponding changes in department mandates and visions, and the reasons delineated for such change. Several tables will serve as necessary signposts throughout this discussion in the following section. Tables 3.0-3.10 provide examples of the 'employability' discourse surrounding the reform of social assistance programming in each of the three provinces. For general introductory purposes, of particular importance here are Tables 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2.[28]

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[27] In this study, the chosen method of discourse analysis yields these dimensions for the time frame of 1993-2004. Readers are encouraged to also acknowledge the valuable insights provided by Boychuk's (1998) development and application of a five-fold typology (e.g. residual; market/family enforcement; market performance; conservative; and redistributive models) in his analysis of the trajectories of social assistance regimes across Canada pre-/post-1950 until circa 1992.

Table 3.0: Ministry Name and Mission Changes by Province

British Columbia	
1992/93-1996/97	Ministry of Social Services
1992/93	The Ministry of Social Services serves the people of British Columbia by helping them during times of need and assisting them to regain or achieve self-sufficiency.
1997/98-1999/00	Ministry of Human Resources
1997/98	The mission of the Ministry of Human Resources is to help people in British Columbia achieve economic security through attachment to the labour market and, when necessary, through income support and related services.
2000/01-2001/02	Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security
2000/01	The ministry's mission is to link people with opportunities for success. It helps people find and keep jobs. It provides a vital safety net that helps people while they move from welfare to work.
2001/02-2004/05	Ministry of Human Resources
2002/03	The Ministry of Human Resources provides services that move people toward sustainable employment and assist individuals and families in need.
Alberta	
1992/93-1998/99	Alberta Family and Social Services
1992/93	To lead in the provision of income support and social support services through support of clients and families, through partnerships with communities and other stakeholders, and stewardship over public resources.
1993/94	Keep families responsible and accountable, adults independent, children safe
1998/99-2004/05	Alberta Human Resources and Employment
2000/01	Alberta Human Resources and Employment contributes to the Alberta Advantage by working with partners to: Assist Albertans to reach their full potential in society and the economy; Foster safe, fair, productive, innovative workplaces; Support those in need
2001/02	To provide a continuum of services that assist people in need, helps individuals succeed in the workforce and fosters safe and healthy workplaces.
2002/03	To provide a continuum of services and information that enables individuals to succeed in the changing workforce, fosters safe and healthy workplaces, and assists people in need.

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[28] Each ministry organizes and designs the administration and presentation of their annual reports differently. This is why in Table 3.1, BC relies upon goals and values, Alberta conducts business and Saskatchewan primarily operates on the basis of mandates.

Table 3. 0 Cont'd.	
	Saskatchewan
1992/93-2002/03	Saskatchewan Social Services
1992/93	Saskatchewan Social Services advances the social well-being of Saskatchewan children, families and individuals who live in communities that support and enable them to reach their potential.
2000/01	Our vision for the future is that all Saskatchewan people who are presently disadvantaged in the economy or in their community have the same opportunities as other citizens to participate equitably in the economic, social and cultural life of the province.
2001/02	Saskatchewan people in marginalized or disadvantaged circumstances have opportunities as citizens to be included, to contribute, and to participate equitably in the social, economic and cultural life of the province.
2002/03-2004/05	Department of Community Resources and Employment
2003/04	The vision of Community Resources and Employment (formerly social services) is that Saskatchewan people, regardless of differences in needs and circumstances, have opportunities to contribute and be included in the economic and social life of the province.
Source: All BC, AB, and SK ministry annual reports, 1993-2004	

Table 3.0 illustrates changes in the name and mission for each ministry concerned with social assistance. Table 3.1 (a, b, c) documents how the goals, values, and businesses that characterize each ministry's approach to the administration and design of social assistance programming have changed over time. Observed together, both of these tables exemplify the creation of an active social assistance programming discourse at the administrative, structural level. Sometimes the changes in goals and values are directly related to the redesign of ministry names and missions. At other times, core values have remained stable in the midst of structural changes to the ministry.

As shown in Table 3.0, the BC and Alberta ministries were the first to pursue an image of income assistance as clearly connected to active labour market policy and a human resource model. This is evident by the replacement of the common name 'social services' with the Ministry of Human Resources in BC in 1997 and Human Resources and Employment in Alberta in 1998.

Table 3.1: The Business of the Ministries

Table 3.1a

	BC Goals, Values, and Principles
1992/93-1996/97	Ministry of Social Services
1992/93	*Goals*: • To receive and investigate reports of abuse and neglect of children and to fulfill this goal in a manner which maintains or reunites the family whenever this is consistent with the best interests of the children. • To provide financial assistance and support services to eligible individuals and to assist those persons to achieve or regain financial independence. • To provide care and/or support services which assist people with mental handicaps to achieve maximum independence and to participate as full members of their communities.
1993/94	• To ensure the safety and well-being of children while supporting families. • To provide financial assistance to eligible individuals and families to cover the basic needs of shelter and support, so they do not experience undue hardship due to lack of income. • To enable individuals with mental disabilities to function independently in the community.
1997/98-1999/00	Ministry of Human Resources
1997/98	The ministry values: • People in all their diversity; • Children, families and supportive communities; • Work over welfare; • Respect for the personal dignity of our clients; • Excellence in service; • Each other and the work we do; • Personal and corporate responsibility; • Fair decision-making; • Ideas and innovation; • Public confidence in our work; • Partnerships with communities
2000/01-2001/02	Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security
2000/01	The ministry's values are statements of principles that guide us in our work: **People**: • We respect people in all their diversity • We treat people with dignity and respect • We value each other and the work that we do • We are committed to employment equity **Self-sufficiency**: • We value initiative, resilience, and flexibility • We believe in recognizing and building on people's strengths **Accountability**: • We take personal and corporate responsibility for our work • We believe in fair and transparent decision-making • We work to return the greatest possible value for every tax dollar spent **Excellence**: • We are committed to excellent service • We value partnerships • We place a high value on dynamic ideas and innovation

Table 3.1a Cont'd.

2001/02-2003/04	Ministry of Human Resources
2001/02	*Core values*: integrity, fiscal responsibility, accountability, respect, and choice *New guiding principles*: • **Personal responsibility** for maximizing potential • **Active participation** by clients • **Innovative partnerships** between the ministry and the private sector and communities[a] • **Citizen confidence** in the income assistance system • **Fairness and transparency**, with less red tape • **Clear outcomes**, whereby the ministry measures success by the success of the people being served • **Accountability** for results achieved

Source: BC annual reports, 1993-2004.

[a] In 2002/03, the same principles, with the exception of this one, were in place. In 2003/04, this principle was once again in place.

Table 3.1a confirms that in BC, the 1992/93 ministerial goal of providing assistance to individuals to alleviate their experiences of economic hardship was no longer in place in 1997. Instead, the ministry began to place emphasis on values synonymous with neo-liberal reform aims: ‘work over welfare’ and ‘personal responsibility. ’ These values were soon replaced by the principles of ‘self-sufficiency’ and ‘accountability’ in the year 2000 and an interest in the ‘active participation’ of clients in 2001. Compared to Alberta, however, Table 3.0 also shows that BC did not set aside the ministry’s mission of providing a social safety net until 2002. In contrast, Alberta moved much quicker in the retrenchment of the social safety net but in a slightly unusual way. Preserving the name ‘social services,’ the ministry was the first of the three provinces to state an intent to shift from passive to active assistance programming in order to ‘help individuals be independent’ (see Table 3.0 and Table 3.1b).

Table 3.1b

	Alberta Core Business
1992/93-1998/99	Alberta Family and Social Services
1995/96	Help individuals be independent - *goals:* • Transform welfare into an active employment initiative from a passive assistance program • Assist all individuals to maximize their potential towards independence • Improve coordination of services to reduce costs of provincial and federal labour market services Keep children safe
1998/99	Help individuals be independent - *goals:* • Provide a basic level of income support to those people unable to provide for their basic needs • Help welfare clients to regain independence • Ensure appropriate surrogate decision-making mechanisms, supports and safeguards are available to assist adult Albertans, who are, or who wish to prepare for a time when they may be, unable to make personal decisions independently • Enable adults with developmental disabilities, with the support of their families and friends, to live, work and participate as valued citizens in the communities of their choice • Encourage and support preventive social programming in communities Keep children safe
1998/99-2004/05	Alberta Human Resources and Employment
1999/00	Supporting Albertans in achieving and maintaining economic independence Supporting Albertans in need • Assist low-income Albertans to achieve economic self-sufficiency • Provide financial assistance to Albertans in need Supporting Alberta's workers and employers in creating productive workplaces
2001/02	Providing individual and income supports Providing information Albertans need about careers, workplaces, the labour market and department services Assisting Albertans to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment Promoting positive workplace environments and the establishment of professional and workplace standards
2002/03	People Skills Workplace investments

Source: AB annual reports, 1993-2004.

And, although Table 3.1b also shows that the ministerial goal of providing assistance on the basis of need resurfaced in 1998/99 in Alberta, human capital development (e.g. individual success in workplaces) was increasingly prioritized. By 2002 it was signalled by the identification of 'people, skills, and workplace investments' as the ministry's main businesses. Tables 3.0 and 3.1c show that the Saskatchewan ministry was much slower in its identification with active income assistance programming compared to the other two provinces.

Table 3.1c:

	Saskatchewan Mandates and Principles
1992/93-2002/03	Saskatchewan Social Services
1992/93	*Mandate*: • Assists vulnerable families to care and support their members • Provides basic income support for children, families and individuals, and works with others to reduce the risks and disadvantages caused by poverty; • Protects children from abuse and neglect and assists people facing family violence through prevention, education, and facilitating substitute or alternative care or shelter; • Promotes a standard quality of daycare, and supports parents in achieving a balance between family and other responsibilities; • Promotes a balance of responsibility and meeting needs in youth, and provides programs for those in conflict with the law; • Supports independent, community-based care for persons with mental and physical disabilities; • Works across sectors within communities to identify, own and respond to the social needs of their members • Takes leadership within and outside government to achieve this mandate *Principles:* Preventive, Collaborative, Holistic, Culturally Appropriate, Supportive, Empowering
2002/03-2003/04	Department of Community Resources and Employment
2002/03	*Mandate:* • Increase participation in the labour market, and help individuals match their employment skills to the needs of the labour market; • Reduce dependency on social assistance and related programs, and improve resources to facilitate transitions to self-reliance • Increase parents' access to child care and other resources for development of children and economic participation of parents; • Support stable attachment of children to their families and kinship networks, and address the needs of children in need of protection or care; • Improve housing outcomes for lower-income people, and encourage home ownership and self-reliance in housing; • Help individuals and families address the impacts of disability, and encourage accommodation and inclusion of people with disabilities in labour markets and communities; • Help communities increase their capacity to support the well-being and inclusion of all individuals and families; • Provide financial and other assistance to individuals of families or organizations to help achieve the goals of economic independence and inclusion in families and communities • Work with employers, communities, other departments and other governments to improve opportunities and outcomes for all Saskatchewan people

Table 3.1c Cont'd.	
2003/04	The mandate of the Department is to work with citizens to help them build better lives for themselves through economic independence, strong families, inclusive communities, and active involvement in Saskatchewan's labour force and economy. Department programs support employment, child development, independent living for seniors and people with disabilities, and affordable quality housing for low and moderate-income people. The Department also offers programs that ensure basic standards of income and child-well being are maintained.
Source: SK annual reports, 1993-2004.	

It was not until the year 2002 that social support became more clearly linked with employment capabilities, as suggested by the introduction of the new Department of Community Resources and Employment. And, unlike the other two provinces, the ministry in Saskatchewan consistently followed a mandate that included providing basic income support for children and their families in order to improve their economic situations throughout the 1990s. Coinciding with the implementation of the new ministry name, the mandate was re-written in 2002 and replaced with intentions to not only provide income support but also 'to reduce dependency on assistance and improve resources to emphasize parents' self-reliance' (see Table 3.1b).

Some additional observations can be made about Tables 3.0 and 3.1. Unlike the other two provinces, the implementation of the Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources and Employment, with its new mission and mandate, suggests that the pursuit of active assistance programming is matched with an interest in creating socially cohesive communities (see Tables 3.0 and 3.1c). In this respect, Saskatchewan stands out as the province that has reformed social assistance most in accordance with the Third Way thinking discussed in Chapter 2. In Saskatchewan, rights to social assistance must be balanced with responsibilities; these responsibilities include being actively employable and community minded citizens.

Tables 3.0 and 3.1a also strikingly illustrate that compared to the other two provinces, the BC ministry has grappled with indecision and uncertainty when making its changes. From 1993 onward, the mission statements imply that the ministry has engaged in a constant act of balancing between assisting individuals into employment and yet also providing a safety net. This balance appears to have become most precarious when the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security was introduced. Prior to this name change, BC designed its social assistance programming with a human resources focus. The new name existed only one year before it was reversed to its post-1997 human resources designation. Moreover, the BC ministry has experienced several distinct value shifts with each change of name (see Tables 3.0 and 3.1a). In contrast, although Alberta experienced changes in goals since the introduction of Alberta Human Resources and Employment, each change from 1999-2002 appears to be grounded in similar ideas. Through re-wording, new goals have been progressively built upon preceding ones. Table 3.1a shows that the only consistent value over time in BC has been 'accountability.'

Tables 3.0 and 3.1 (a, b, c) establish the explicit ministerial discourse that has grounded social assistance reforms in each province. In the following section, I turn to the results of the second stage of this discourse analysis, the specific dimensions that implicitly suggest the policy assumptions and strategies underpinning the shift toward employability as a basis of entitlement to assistance. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive of one another. Moreover, it is within a discussion of four of these dimensions that I discuss in detail the specific waves of social assistance reform. For general introductory purposes, these are listed according to year and province in Table 3.2 below. Following this table, Table 3.3 documents the current status of social assistance in each province. Both tables serve as important signposts of 'where are we now' alongside a discourse analysis intended to show 'how did we get here.'

Table 3.2: Major Changes to Social Assistance Programming by Year

British Columbia	
1995	Introduction of BC Benefits
2002	Replacement of BC Benefits with BC Employment and Assistance
Alberta	
1993	Dramatic reforms to Supports for Independence (SFI)
2004	Replacement of SFI with Alberta Works
Saskatchewan	
1998	Introduction of Building Independence programs to complement the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan

Where applicable, the discussion of the four dimensions is linked to the changes outlined in the above tables and Tables 3.4-3.10, still to be introduced. Some of the findings of in-depth interviews with parents are also inter-woven with the results of the discourse analysis in order to show how the creation of employability via these four dimensions manifests itself in their everyday lives. Since the final dimension of this analysis – de-/re-gendering – constitutes one of the more unique contributions of this study, it is the sole focus of Chapter 4.

Table 3.3: Provincial Social Assistance Programs, 2004[a]

	British Columbia **Jan-04**	**Alberta** **Mar-04**	**Saskatchewan** **Aug-04**
Ministry	Ministry of Human Resources	Ministry of Human Resources and Employment	Ministry of Community Resources and Employment
Act	Employment and Assistance Act	Income and Employment Supports Act	Saskatchewan Assistance Act
Social Assistance Program	BC Employment and Assistance	Alberta Works Employment and Training Services Income Support Health Benefits Child Support Services	Social Assistance Plan Building Independence Programs Saskatchewan Employment Supplement Family Health Benefits Saskatchewan Child Benefit Provincial Training Allowance Child Care Subsidies Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities Jobs First Transitional Employment Allowance
Eligibility	Means-test Asset limits	Means-test Asset limits	Means-test Asset limits
Classification of Clients (Employability Status)	Expected to Work Temporarily Excused (25 exemptions for persons excused from work and time limits)	Expected to Work Not Exepcted to Work Learners	Fully Employable Not Fully Employable
Benefits	Support rate Shelter rate Supplementary benefits	Core essential benefit Core shelter benefit Supplementary benefits	Adult allowance[d] Shelter allowance Supplementary benefits

Table 3.3 Cont'd.

Policy Regulations of Employability	Employment Plan[b] Time Limits	Client Investment Plan Client Reporting Card	Transition Plans
Expected Employment of Mothers	Youngest child reaches age of three	Youngest child reaches age of six months	No specific age limit of children
Earnings Exemption	No earnings exemption - wages are deducted dollar per dollar from benefits paid except for persons with disabilities	Earnings are exempt - Couples or Singles: maximum amount exemption is $115 + 25% of earnings[c] Single parents: $230 + 25% of earnings per adult	Earnings are exempt - families: maximum amount exemption is $125 single: $25 + 20% of the remaining amount (maximum amount of $100) childless couples: $50 + 20% of the remaining amount (maximum amount of $175)
Additional Support through Ministry	Child Care Subsidy Crisis Assistance Family Maintenance Program	Child Care Subsidy Maintenance Enforcement Program	Child Care Subsidy Family Maintenance Program
Health Benefits	Health and Dental Services Healthy Kids Program	Alberta Child Health Benefit Alberta Adult Health Benefit	Family Health Benefit
Child Benefits	BC Family Bonus National Child Benefit supplement (*amount deducted from benefits paid)	Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit National Child Benefit supplement (not deducted from benefits paid as of 2003)	Saskatchewan Child Benefit National Child Benefit supplement (*amount deducted from benefits paid)
Appeal Tribunal	Appeal tribunal in place	Appeal tribunal in place	Appeal tribunal in place

a. Disability policy and programs are not included in this table.

b. Plans are limited to 'expected to work' clients.

c. The first $25 earned is not taken off of benefit. Persons can keep 20% of the remaining wage to a maximum of $75 before wages are deducted.

For couples with or without children, the exemption applies to each working adult.

d. Adult allowance is provided for food, clothing, travel, household, and personal needs.

Restriction

Restriction of Benefit Amounts

In each province, *restriction of benefit amounts* has been a reform strategy utilized to stress that individuals are better off working than being on assistance. As the first province to bring about reforms to create 'active' assistance programming, Alberta introduced *Supports for Independence* (*SFI*) in 1990 to replace Social Allowance, the pre-existing needs-tested program for unemployable persons and families (Reichwein 2002). Like Social Allowance, *SFI* was administered by the 1972 Social Development Act.[29] *SFI*, however, focused more on client independence and self-sufficiency and through stricter eligibility criteria made it possible to address the province's impending financial crisis exacerbated by increasing assistance caseloads (Alberta Family and Social Services 1994).

In 1993, the ministry more directly responded to the problem of perceived dependence on the program by undertaking a series of reforms (Cooper and Mebs 2000). The creation of a means and asset tested program on the basis of six objectives (see Table 3.4) and the new ministerial goals introduced in the 1995/96 annual report (see Table 3.1b) directly signalled the "… the shift from a passive welfare system to an active system focused on helping people regain independence through employment and training" (Alberta Family and Social Services 1994: 5). Aside from these objectives, then minister Mike Cardinal gave policy planners three principles to operate by in the design of reform strategies: 1) nobody really wants to be on welfare; 2) welfare recipients cannot be better off on welfare than the general working population; and 3) any job is a good job (Elton, Sieppert, Azmier, and Roach 1997: 20).

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[29] *SFI* was one of several other income supports programs administered by Alberta Family and Social Services. Since the focus of this study is social assistance, discussion will only centre on *SFI*, and later *Alberta Works*. Other income support programs under *SFI* included, at various times, the Widow's Pension, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Alberta Assured Income Plan, Family Maintenance, Employment Initiatives, and Fraud and Error Control. *Albert Works* includes Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Health Benefits, and Child Support Services.

Table 3.4: Alberta - Objectives of 1993 Reforms

- To encourage and support employment and other alternatives to dependence and expand opportunities for employment and on-the-job training
- To reduce dependence on assistance
- To transform SFI into a transitional support program, while maintaining the commitment to support people who are unable to become fully independent
- To clarify that SFI is a last resort program and communicate program expectations
- To promote equity between assistance recipients and those who work in low income jobs
- To centralize student finance in one department of government

Source: Alberta Family and Social Services Annual Report (1994: 8)

The ministry's shift toward employability as a policy goal and condition of assistance receipt directly involved the restriction of benefit amounts. Reforms introduced to *SFI* in 1993 included reductions in standard allowances and shelter payments, restrictions on assets, and outright elimination of some benefits (Alberta Family and Social Services 1993) (see Table 3.5). Benefits were reduced by 19% for single individuals, by 13% for single parents with one child and by 12% for couples with two children (Boessenkool 1997; Freiler and Cerny 1998; Klein and Montgomery 2001).

Table 3.5: Reforms Introduced in Alberta, 1993

Reductions/Changes
• Standard Allowance for each adult reduced by $26 • Shelter rates reduced by $50 for each household (by $100 for childless couples) • Total equity for owned vehicles (two or less) cannot exceed $4000 • Anyone who spends more than 7 days in recipient's home and their relationship to the recipient (i.e. common law partner) must be reported to SFI worker
Elimination of Benefits
• Extra laundry for a child in diapers • Moving expenses in Alberta • Telephone connections and deposits • Household supplies to set up house • Damage deposits (now only available to persons leaving an abusive relationship)

Table 3.5 Cont'd.
Elimination of Benefits
• Extra transportation money • Utility arrears • Furniture/appliance • Disposable diapers
Benefits added
• A maximum $150 job-related benefit is available for SFI recipients following their Employment Plans • Earnings exemption increased
Source: Alberta Family and Social Services (1993)

Although ten years has since passed since these reforms and no other drastic restrictions in benefit amounts have been made, Alberta mothers who have cycled on and off of assistance can recall how past benefits were more plentiful:

> [T]here used to be a clothing allowance so that you could go [to work]. It was three hundred dollars for the year. You could go and ask your social worker and it's like kids clothes for school or clothes for work or whatever... A couple of us were told they don't do that anymore...
>
> *Miranda, lone mother, 2 children (RRT) (AB)*[30]

> Well, before a few years back, you were able to get a bed or furniture for the kids and stuff. Now it's one time period in their lifetime...Um, if need be they would give you a food voucher mid month. Now I believe they don't, they send you to the Food Bank. Um, school time you were able to get all the supplies that you need and school fees. Uh, and now you gotta kind of look for the best school that has the lowest fees because you only get a certain amount for their fees and school supplies...
>
> *Justine, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

In BC, the restriction in benefit amounts as a reform strategy emerged in 1995, two years later than in Alberta. However, it was a change that appeared to be under discussion for quite some time leading up to its introduction. In 1991, BC entered into a provincial/federal government "Agreement to Enhance the Employability of Social Assistance Recipients." As a result of this agreement, the Employment Initiatives Project (EIP) was established to develop and plan training and employment programs with the federal government (Ministry of Social Services 1993a). Two years later, the Ministry Advisory Council on Income Assistance was appointed to recommend the enhancement of seven principles (community, security, responsibility, opportunity, partnership, dialogue, and sustainability) in the delivery of assistance programs (Ministry of Social Services 1993b). In this same year, the ministerial document *The Challenge of Change* cited several reasons behind the need to reform social assistance to "help people move from welfare to work" (Ministry of Social Services 1993b: 11). These reasons included: the economic recessions of the 1980s and 1990s and the subsequent growth in unemployment rates and assistance caseloads; an observed increase in poverty, reductions in federal spending support via CAP (the 'cap on CAP'); and the emergence of the provincial deficit.

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[30] The first abbreviation following the description of a parent's name and family structure refers to my classification of their current status on social assistance in their province of residence. Appendix B explains the coding of this classification and also provides additional details on all parents' personal situations. The second abbreviation simply refers to a parent's province of residence.

In 1995, the *BC Benefits Act* replaced the 1972 *Guaranteed Available Income for Need Act (GAIN)*. *BC Benefits* was designed to return income assistance to a program of 'last resort' through a series of reforms that were first introduced in the *Premier's Forum on New Opportunities for Working and Living* document. The 1995 reforms included restricting benefit amounts – benefits were cut by 8-10 percent for welfare recipients who were deemed employable and did not have dependents (Klein and Montgomery 2001). The restriction of benefit amounts was another important reform strategy in the second wave of social assistance restructuring in 2002 when the Liberal government announced the replacement of *BC Benefits Act* with the *BC Employment and Assistance Act* (British

Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2002b).[31] Benefit rates were cut by $43 for lone mothers with one child and by $90 for parents with two children.[32] Employable couples with one child, aged 18-54, experienced a $47 reduction whereas parents with two children experienced a $45 reduction (compared to 2001 benefit rates). In addition, shelter allowances were reduced for families with three or more people, additional cuts were made (e.g. the capping of crisis grants for food and clothing), and earnings exemptions were eliminated (Klein and Long 2003) (see also Table 3.2, 'Earnings Exemption' row).[33] In this second wave of reform, Premier Gordon Campbell gave the ministry three objectives to pursue in the re-design of social assistance (see Table 3.6). Reasons for the need to reform social assistance included individuals' cycling on and off assistance and the likely increase in caseloads due to population growth and aging (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2002a; British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2003).

Table 3.6: Objectives of BC Redesign, 2001/02[a]

- Continue to streamline regional service delivery to clients on income assistance
- Implement training and support programs to assist income assistance clients in returning to the workforce
- With the Administrative Justice Project, develop a single internal appeal process

Source: Ministry of Human Resources Annual Report (2002: 8)

a. Three key projects outlined by Premier Gordon Campbell in a 2001 letter addressed to then Minister of Human Resources, Murray Coell.

Kara, a lone mother of three children who has been more often on assistance than off it for the last ten years, questions the logic behind the recent cuts to shelter allowances and the elimination of earnings exemptions in BC:

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[31] Aside from Income Assistance, the following programs are included in this Act: Disability Assistance, Protecting Children at Risk, Child Care, Family Bonus, Healthy Kids, and Detecting Fraud and Abuse (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2004d).

[32] Henceforth, all currency amounts citied are in Canadian funds.

[33] Earnings exemptions still exist for persons on assistance in Alberta and Saskatchewan (see Table 3.2).

> [And] they actually recently lowered them just what a year ago was it? That they actually lowered, it's just like how are you guys doing this?...My last place I was in, I was in a three bedroom basement suite and I was paying $810 including hydro. Well, they only paid $590, so the other two hundred and twenty had to come out of my pocket, which was my food money…They took away our hundred dollars that before we used to be allowed to earn…. they used to only take twenty-five percent of what you earned. Now they take dollar for dollar. That's taking a lot of incentive away for people wanting to actually go [to work].
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

In contrast to policy changes in BC and Alberta, restriction of benefit amounts has not been a popular reform strategy used to create employability in Saskatchewan, at least in the 1990s and early 21st century. In fact, reductions in benefit amounts first occurred in the two waves of reform in the 1980s (see Boychuk, 1998). According to Warnock (2004), benefit rates have been more or less frozen since 1982 and only very modest increases to benefit rates have occurred in the 1990s. Even though no major restrictions to benefit amounts have been made in Saskatchewan, parents in this province share concerns with parents in BC and Alberta that the benefits they receive are simply not enough to afford groceries, rent, and health care:

> He hasn't been even to the dentist yet. And, um, I know it is only partly covered…And I found out what's the remaining amount and it's about $100 and something dollars, just to get my teeth cleaned and checked and that was it. And I'm like, you know, that's harsh, it may not sound a lot to someone compared to what they actually pay, but what I receive, that's quite a bit, that's like, half of our food.
>
> *Joanne, lone mother, 6 year old son (E-MC) (BC)*

> You don't get enough. For nutrition wise, you do not get enough to meet the requirements, even of the four basic food groups – nutrition-wise – of the fruit and vegetables. Your workers and most of society expect you to make that whole cheque last. Which, most average people, that cheque's gone within the first week. Groceries, groceries and bills, it's gone within the first week. And most, most people on assistance already have, I get disconnection notices every month because I don't meet the full requirement. I don't get enough. I put a $100 a

> month on my hydro, $100 a month on my phone, and I still don't, I still get disconnection notices because it's more than I put on, I get every month.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

> I get $120 each month [basic allowance]. That $120 has to feed four people. It has to buy diapers for David. It has to buy milk weekly... Um, has to buy diapers for David which are quite expense. $120 a month is supposed to do all that. Plus get me transportation… It's supposed to make sure I've got my laundry soap and everything else. It's blown away. It doesn't do it. It doesn't do it all – $120…And I have to pay my phone bill out of that too… [Rent is] $525. They pay $440 of it. … And it's got to feed my kids all month…It just doesn't work. It's crazy you know.
>
> *Jessica, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (SK)*

The introduction of family maintenance programs in the 1990s is one common reform strategy shared by all three provinces that involves a restriction in benefit amounts. Although each ministry's objective of enforcing ex-spouses' provision of spousal or child support is important and valid, parents in all three provinces do not benefit from these payments simply because they are matched with a dollar for dollar reduction in their social assistance benefits. As with family maintenance programs, the implementation of child benefit programs has not necessarily improved parents' economic situations. In 1995, BC was the first Canadian province to introduce the BC Family Bonus as part of the Child Tax Benefit initiative.[34] Three years later, Saskatchewan introduced the Saskatchewan Child Benefit under the *Building Independence* initiative and Alberta introduced the Alberta Child Benefit. All three provincial child benefit programs were designed to complement either the Child Tax Benefit, as in the case of BC, or the later National Child Benefit, as in the case of Alberta and Saskatchewan. At the policy and political level, these programs were intended to reduce the stigma children from low-income families may feel as a result of their and others' knowledge that their family is 'on welfare' and to provide them with the means to access other social services, such as recreation. However, all three provincial child benefit programs have meant a dollar for dollar deduction in benefits paid to parents, meaning they are not that much better off than they were before their children were 'moved off of welfare.'

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[34] The Child Tax Benefit replaced Family Allowances in 1993 and was designed to aid parents with incomes under a certain threshold in the care of their children.

Mary, a lone mother of one child from BC, explains that the restrictions in benefit amounts according to maintenance or child benefit payments often translate into parents "stealing from Peter to pay Paul." Her words highlight a common experience of mothers living on assistance in the three provinces:

> And out of my child tax credit, that's where I have to pay my bills and my groceries and a majority of the time I can't even pay for the school stuff at school.
> *Brenda, lone mother, 4 children (RRT) (BC)*

> And I don't get to keep it [support payment] anymore, which I find is totally unfair in this province They allow you "X" amount of dollars free and clear to work without deducting you, but yet my maintenance doesn't classify as extra income. And I just don't think that's fair. I feel like just ripping somebody's head off and saying are you guys on glue? If he's paying the money that's supposed to help my daughter for her sporting, her crafts, her this, her extra-curricular activities type deal...You guys turn around and, and take it off mine? So essentially I'm, I'm the one who gets burnt paying.
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

> You don't get enough money from them, like food-wise.... because it's like, family allowance, all my money goes for groceries. And at the end of the month, I don't really have any money to buy them anything so...You can't even buy them food.
> *Michelle, common law relationship, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

Although child benefit programs were designed with good intentions, mothers in all three provinces tend to rely on them to make ends meet in terms of grocery costs or other monthly bills (e.g. telephone, hydro) rather than using the benefits for their children's clothing needs or recreational activities. Hence, as far as Justine is concerned:

> [T]he only way when you get maintenance that it helps you and the kids is if you are working because the government takes it dollar for dollar when you're on assistance. So it's like those kids don't see that money and it's not there to help you out…
>
> *Justine, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

In a way, family maintenance programs act as supplementary to assistance programming. At the same time, however, they also uphold the underlying assumption that parents are better off working than living on assistance.

Restriction of Access

Related to restriction in benefit amounts, *restriction of access* to assistance is also based on the idea that it creates incentives for employment. The assumption is that the harder it is to access assistance, the more likely parents are to find alternative ways of providing for their families. Of the three provinces, BC stands out again as the province furthest along in the use of this strategy. Under *BC Benefits*, the ministry imposed a three month waiting period for individuals applying for assistance despite the CAP provision that residency requirements were not permitted. Moreover, in 1996, the ministry offered applicants transportation fare to return to their province of last residence if they did not meet the residency requirement (Ministry of Social Services 1996). The underlying assumption beneath such policies suggests that BC only intended to look after its own low-income population and only if individuals proved they were really unable to provide for themselves in their home province. Potential recipients were also restricted access to *BC Benefits* by the reduction of asset levels. For single employable individuals, asset levels were reduced to $500 from $2500. For childless couples, the asset level was reduced to $1000 from $5000. Finally, individuals who refused to work or had actually quit their last job were no longer entitled to hardship assistance.

In 1997, the three month residency requirement was withdrawn. Under the present *BC Employment and Income Assistance*, however, even more strict eligibility criteria have been imposed. Currently, potential recipients over age 19 must be financially independent for at least two years in order to qualify for assistance (Klein and Long 2003). 'Financial independence' is usually defined as participation in employment. Income from student loans or training allowances does not satisfy the independence test. Potential recipients may be exempt from this test for a variety of circumstances, including: fleeing an abusive relationships as in the case of lone mothers; youth leaving the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development; and medical conditions such as pregnancy (British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance 2005a). If this two year independence test is waived, however, this does not mean potential recipients are also exempt from the second step in applying for assistance, a three week waiting period. During this period, potential recipients must search for a job before being informed if they are eligible for benefits. According to the *BC Employment and Income Assistance Policy Manual*, the three week work search is intended to stress the importance of employment before parents are designated as eligible recipients (British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance 2005a). One interviewee, Amy, was not so lucky to be exempt from this obligatory job search in her recent application for assistance even when she was visibly pregnant.

> Well, when you apply for welfare, they make you go through a Job Zone thing where you got to go and hand out all these resumes. The whole key to that is that if you've actually handed out all these resumes, some people should call you back and you should get the job...they make you wait like a month and a half before

> you can get your first cheque. But that's to see if you can actually get a job. Like, I'm going out every single day and they can tell that I'm pregnant because I'm showing but you know I'm still out there handing out my resumes.
>
> *Amy, lone mother, 5 month old son (E-AC) (BC)*

While in Karen's case the Job Zone program was a success, it was also bittersweet since she had recently completed two years of post-secondary education for a position as an office administrator not as a fast-food restaurant manager. In her words:

> You want to be on Income Assistance, you have to go through a three week thing. I handed out resumes and I ended up handing one out to Burger King just on a joke. And I will honestly state that I handed out one to Burger King just on a joke because I had to hand them out.
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

Compared to BC, restriction of access is pursued differently in Alberta and Saskatchewan. At present, there is no obligatory job search during a waiting period in these two provinces. However, in a study of the impact of Alberta's earlier reforms, from 1993 to 1996, Boessenkool (1997) explains that applications for assistance typically involved a two-step process, one stage of outright denial (except in extreme circumstances), followed by a second stage where the applicant is obligated to show caseworkers that they have indeed exhausted all other forms of support. Some years later, Miranda spoke of the greater difficulty she experienced in her last application for assistance:

> Like just generally it was really different this time going in. There's a lot more paperwork… you had to be more accountable…There were three different things that I had to go do before they even put my application in for social assistance.
>
> *Miranda, lone mother, 2 children (RRT) (AB)*

Justine, a lone mother of two children, observes that for everyone in need in Alberta: "They're [the ministry] making it tougher and tougher and tougher for us to get it [social assistance]."

In only one case in Alberta, Doreen actually commended SFI and the more recent *Alberta Works* for restricting access to assistance. As the following exchange reveals, her approval is understandable since her own experiences of living on assistance are historically and inter-generationally based.

> Doreen: I'm one of the few people that thinks that the system works and how difficult it is to get on SFI is a good thing. I'm one of the few people that think that it should be harder to go on SFI than it should be to go get a job.
> Interviewer: And why do you think that?
> Doreen: Because I'm a third generation SFI, welfare child.
> *Doreen, common law, 6 children (RRT) (AB)*

Boessenkool's also analysis shows that in the earlier years following the 1993 reforms, diverting individuals away from Alberta social assistance also meant directing them to alternative programs, such as those run as a result of partnerships between the social services ministry and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Career Development. Similarly, potential recipients or 'persons at risk' also tend to be diverted away from Saskatchewan assistance into other income supplement and/or educational allowance programs that were implemented as part of the *Building Independence* initiative (Community Resources and Employment 2004; Schafer and Clemens 2002).

Although different in their use of restriction of access as a reform strategy, Alberta and Saskatchewan ministries do share with BC the overall post-1993 interest in continually reforming social assistance programming. In June 2001, the minister of Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) appointed a five-member MLA committee to review low-income programs. The intent was to determine "…whether programs and services for low-income Albertans met their needs and how these programs might be improved" (MLA Committee to Review Low-Income Programs 2001a: 3). The results of the review revealed social assistance recipients' difficulty in engaging in paid work and/or improving their family economic situations as a result of several factors, including low benefits, unaffordable housing, and limited health benefits. Participants also reported the need for enhancement of employment and training supports, simplified and sensitive service delivery, and co-ordinated delivery of information about programs and service (MLA Committee to Review Low-Income Programs 2001a). Individuals who had participated in education and training programs reported the need for more service delivery support (support other than financial) to assist their efforts at achieving family well-being.

In 2004, the *Income and Employment Supports Act* (originally Bill 32), was introduced in Alberta to respond to the low-income review's specific recommendation that a single, integrated program be created to flexibly meet individuals' needs in a more simplified manner. For example, there is one point of entry for new clients (MLA Committee to Review Low-Income Programs 2001b) (see Table 3.2). According to then minister Clint Dunford, "Bill 32 builds on our belief that social programs must offer a hand up, not a handout. It is about making programs work for people instead of trying to fit people into programs that do not always match their particular needs" (Government of Alberta 2003: 1). The Act replaced *SFI* with *Alberta Works*, a new program that more explicitly links income support with employment skills training in policy and other benefits, such as child care support.[35] Under *Alberta Works*, the Alberta Adult Health Benefit was introduced and parents' earnings exemptions were increased. Two parent families where both parents are working or single parent families can earn up to $230 per month before their benefits are reduced (see Table 3.2).

In Saskatchewan, changes to social assistance introduced in 1998 have been relatively gentle compared to the other two provinces. With respect to restriction, discussions of reducing (or improving) benefit rates have been minimal. In the 1992 consultation paper *Changing Directions*, the ministry of social services proposed several changes to assistance in response to public criticism of the 1984 and 1987 reforms.[36] However, there was an absence of discussion of benefit rates "…because of the fiscal pressures currently confronting the province" (Saskatchewan Social Services 1992: 1)). Nonetheless, one of the subsequent changes to the *Saskatchewan Assistance Plan (SAP*) as a result of this report was the standardization of basic allowance rates in 1993 (Saskatchewan Social Services 1993).

In the early to mid-1990s, social services was more concerned with developing and pursuing the *Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children* in order to re-design programs and services in the best interests of families. Preparatory discussions were taking place, however, on how to bring about future changes to social assistance. In a discussion paper titled *Redesigning Social Assistance: Preparing for the New Century*, the ministry pointed to the demise of CAP, reduced federal funding for EI, changes in the economy, and increasing poverty and dependency rates all as factors suggesting the need to reform social assistance (Government of Saskatchewan 1996). The redesign proposed was based on five objectives (see Table 3.7). By 1997, these objectives were acted upon with the introduction of the *Saskatchewan Training Strategy (STS): Bridges to Employment* and by 1998, the commencement of the *Building Independence* initiative. Aside from *SAP*, *Building Independence* consists of consists of eight programs that are designed for individuals in need of temporary income support (see Table 3.2).[37]

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[35] The Widow's Pension and the Skills Development Program living allowances were replaced; Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped continued as a separate program (Government of Alberta 2004a). Alberta Works consists of: Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Health Benefits, and Child Support Services.

[36] The following program issues were outlined as requiring change: 1) client communication; 2) client verification; 3) termination of benefits cause; 4) appeal process; 5) qualifying for assistance; 6) common-law relationships; 7) overpayments; 8) 16 and 17 year olds; 9) student financial assistance; 10) trust funds (Saskatchewan Social Services 1992).

Table 3.7: Objectives of Saskatchewan Redesign, 1996+

- Protect the most vulnerable
- Reduce disincentives to work
- Reduce poverty and its effects
- Encourage participation in the economic and social life of communities
- Simplify administration, reduce administrative costs and enhance accountability

Source: Saskatchewan Social Services Annual Report (1996: 12)

To summarize, each province has involved the *restriction* of benefit amounts or restriction of access as key reform strategies. However, differences emerge in their implementation of them. In Alberta, the strategies of restricting benefit amounts and access occurred in the early 1990s and have since been less utilized by the ministry. In Saskatchewan, restriction of benefit amounts occurred a decade earlier and restriction of access does not appear to be as strongly used by the ministry compared to the other two provinces. Finally, it is the province of BC that stands out since restrictions of benefit amounts and access have been integrated as punitive strategies in both waves of reform, over the period 1993 to 2004.

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[37] These programs include: Saskatchewan Child Benefit, Saskatchewan Employment Supplement, Family Health Benefits Program, the Provincial Training Allowance, Jobs First, and Transitional Employment Allowance, Child Day Care Subsidies, Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities.

Despite differences in the extent to which restriction has been used to create an emphasis on employability, all three ministries have pursued these strategies largely on the basis of shared, market-oriented assumptions. First, increased caseloads and provincial deficits have been used to justify cuts to assistance benefits or restricting access to benefits. Second, each ministry has acted upon the assumption that parents need to be taught that work indeed pays better than living on assistance. In their receipt of or application for assistance, parents are subject to market and moral regulation through administrative and regulatory procedures that uphold dominant social constructions of the value of paid work. The ministry's rhetoric of 'making work pay' and 'any job is a good job' resonates with Max Weber's identification of a protestant work ethic as crucial to the progression of capitalism (Weber 1998/1930). Restriction alone, however, cannot solely make parents' entitlement to assistance be contingent on their employability efforts. This achievement also requires the practice of enforcement.

Enforcement

Enforcement constitutes a second dimension of employability conditions that parents are subject to while on assistance. In all three provinces, various characteristics of parents' home-life situations, including the age of the parent's children and whether or not they have medical conditions (e.g. addictions, mental health issues, disability), are used to classify them as employable or not employable under social assistance policy (see Table 3.2, 'Policy Regulations of Employability'). In BC, the age of children at which parents are obligated to seek work has been steadily decreasing over the period 1993 to 2004. Under the current social assistance policy, parents are obligated to seek work when their youngest child is age three whereas it was seven years old under *BC Benefits* and twelve years old under *GAIN* (Ministry of Human Resources 1998; Ministry of Social Services 1994). In Alberta, parents are exempt from the designation of being employable only if their children are under six months of age; this regulation has been in place since the early 1990s (Evans 1996; Freiler and Cerny 1998; Schafer and Clemens 2002). Unlike the other two provinces, there is currently no age set for a parent's youngest child, at which the parent is expected to work, under *SAP*. Where Saskatchewan parents on assistance were entitled to remain at home if their youngest child was under age six in the 1990s (Saskatchewan Social Services 1993), parents are now deemed employable, regardless of their children's ages, at the discretion of caseworkers (Schafer and Clemens 2002; Tweed 2004). Although parenting is a factor in determining employability, lone parents are generally expected to accept employment or training opportunities if they are made available to them (Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources and Employment 2003).

Once they are classified as employable, parents experience a variety of measures and practices that enforce their entitlement to assistance contingent on their employability efforts. Under the *BC Benefits Act*, employment-related programming was introduced in the form of Welfare to Work and Youth Works (see Table 3.8). The eligibility criterion for ongoing income support for persons aged 19 to 24 was mandatory participation in Youth Works (Gorlick and Brethour 1998). For adults over the age of 25, participants were entitled to available training spaces and required to seek participation in the labour market in order to be eligible for benefits under the Welfare to Work program. Benefit recipients, however, were not obligated to engage in training programs. The requirement that adults must also pursue training programs occurred in the later restructuring of *BC Benefits*. As of the 1997-98 annual report, recipients of income assistance and youth allowances "must either be actively searching for employment or be participating in an approved employment-related program" (Ministry of Human Resources 1998: 3). One of the ways active job searches or participation in programming was enforced was to require that applicants attend an orientation session to *BC Benefits* and available job search resources (Ministry of Human Resources 1999).

In the current case of BC assistance, strategies used to restrict access to assistance are complemented by strategies to enforce parents' employability efforts once they are on assistance. If parents conduct a work search during the three week waiting period that is unsuccessful and they are granted income support as an employable recipient, they must then develop a legally binding 'employment plan' with caseworkers. The further enforcement of this employment planning is achieved through the incorporation of time limits (see Table 3.2, 'Policy Regulations of Employability').

Across Canada, not just in the Western provinces, BC is the only social assistance program that limits 'employable' individuals' access to assistance to two out of five years. Single, employable recipients over the age of 19 face potential expulsion from the caseload once they have accessed benefits for two years (Reitsma-Street 2002). Parents designated as 'employable' face different punitive measures. Once their youngest child turns three, parents do have two years to find employment. If their youngest child reaches the age of five, however, and they have not been actively seeking employment, they may have their benefits reduced (by $100 for lone parent families and up to $200 for two parent families) as a form of punishment for failing to meet the conditions of their benefit receipt (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2004c).

Since time limits were introduced under the 2002 *BC Employment and Assistance Act*, April 1, 2004 was the first date that social assistance recipients who had not followed their employment plans could be expelled from the caseload or have their benefits reduced (as in the case of parents). Within a year prior to this date, newspaper coverage of the impending deadline was immense, including reports that up to 28,000 people would be cut off of social assistance (Mickleburgh 2003) that often neglected to mention that parents and single persons are differentially affected by time limits. Not surprisingly, such reports were met with protests from churches, non-profit advocacy groups, and other community organizations. As of the writing of this study, the public interest and media frenzy surrounding the eventual policy 'flip-flop' (Kines 2004) on the part of the ministry are now well known. On February 6, 2004, the ministry reduced the harshness of this enforcement measure by introducing 25 exemption criteria "…designed to ensure that no one who is unable to work or who is actively seeking work will lose assistance" (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2004b: 1).[38]

Although the exemption criteria may appear to signal slight leniency on the part of the ministry, time limits still exist and can be *potentially* enforced. Similar to the three-week obligatory job search, they are an example of an employability strategy that fits within both the restriction and enforcement dimensions. It is their potential enforcement that means that they are a source of anxiety and worry for parents. For example, in Paula's case, they became an immediate reality:

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[38] To provide just a few examples of the exemption criteria, time limits do not affect: persons with persistent multiple barriers, pregnant women, children under the age of 19, and lone mothers with a child under the age of three (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources, 2004a) (see http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2004/timelimts.htm).

> He just turned three so they [the ministry caseworkers] called me in for my review to tell me that, you know, 'okay, the clock's starting.'
> *Paula, lone mother, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*[39]

For Debra, a lone mother who is acting as guardian of a five year old boy, they are an everyday reality: "I know I have twenty three out of twenty four months."

In Alberta and Saskatchewan, the enforcement of employability also occurs through obligatory orientation sessions and employment plans. Both the earlier "employment plan" introduced with the 1993 reforms and the more recent "client investment plan" (*Alberta Works*), require Alberta parents to plan a series of steps to move them back in the workforce as soon as possible (Government of Alberta 2004b). As of 2000, new applicants to *SAP* are required to attend a First Step orientation session "…which outlines the rights and responsibilities of social assistance clients and the expectation that they will work toward becoming self-sufficient"(Saskatchewan Social Services 2001; Saskatchewan Social Services 2003: 12). In 2000, "case plans" with intake interviewers (1995+) were replaced with individuals' completion of "transition plans" that further enforce their efforts to become self-supporting as soon as possible (Gorlick and Brethour 1998; Schafer and Clemens 2002) (see Table 3.2 'Policy Regulations of Employability'). And, according to the 2003 *Saskatchewan Assistance Policy Manual*, recipients may be referred to employment or training opportunities as part of their transition plans regardless of their employability status (Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources and Employment 2003).

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[39] I met Paula just as she had been granted continuous/disability assistance.

Across all three provinces, the enforcement dimension illustrates how parents' receipt of benefits occurs as a result of a 'rights and responsibilities' exchange-type relationship they have with the ministry. Parents' entitlement to assistance is made conditional on their displays of mandatory, employment-oriented behaviour. If deemed employable, parents are rarely allowed to choose how to pursue workforce attachment and must accept the measures and practices dictated by social assistance policy. Indeed, parents must consistently maintain their employability efforts and, thus, their status of deserving of assistance or experience punitive sanctions.

Surveillance

The dimension of surveillance refers to how each provincial social assistance program subjects parents to practices of monitoring in order to ensure their entitlement to benefits. Parents must visibly maintain their employability efforts through two practices: 1) their completion of monthly reports; and 2) their willingness to be exposed to eligibility audits and/or fraud inspections.

In the three provinces, parents must make a monthly report to the ministry that details such things as their income earned, changes in assets, gains/losses in employment, attendance in training or educational programs, and any changes in their family structure or residence location. These reports serve to ensure their receipt of income support in the following month. In BC, mandatory monthly job search cards were first introduced in 1993 under *GAIN* (Ministry of Social Services 1994). Under the current *Employment and Income Assistance* program, parents must still fill out a "monthly report" especially because of the implementation of employment plans and time limits. Parents who are designated as having employment-related obligations but do not enter into an employment plan agreement or do not comply with its conditions are no longer deemed eligible for assistance (British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance 2005a). Failure to comply with legally binding employment plans can result in expulsion from the caseload and is assessed by four conditions: 1) failure to search for employment; 2) leaving employment without just cause; 3) dismissal with just cause; and 4) failure to accept employment (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2004e).

Brenda explains her own experience in learning about the required maintenance of her employability:

> They told me that if I have a plan and whatnot, that as long as I keep that plan, that nothing will happen. But as soon as I don't keep up with that plan either a hundred dollars are gonna be taken away from me or I'm kicked off. With kids or not she said [the caseworker], I'll be kicked off.
>
> *Brenda, lone mother, 4 children (RRT) (BC)*

In Alberta, if parents do not follow through with their client investment plan or meet the expectations associated with their access to assistance, their benefits can be cancelled, reduced or suspended, they may be required to pay back some money, or they may face charges or other penalties (Government of Alberta 2004b):

> [T]hen you have a reporting card that you have to fill out. And then you have to fill out every month, but if you miss filling it out you're cancelled and that's it. So it's really important that you get that filled out.
>
> *Christine, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT) (AB)*

Andrea's experiences as part of a two parent family on assistance in Alberta highlight how mandatory participation is maintained and even how this is linked to gender-specific assumptions about employability. Andrea and Bill have a seven month old child but it is Bill, not Andrea, who is expected to engage in specified programming or be cut off of assistance.

> Bill: …Said it was mandatory. I took a couple other programs before that, and now that my resume is all fixed up and everything and I've been job searching. I just have to do follow up and whatnot and see what, what the responses are. But they're telling me to take this program…
> Andrea: Or we're gonna get cut off.
> *Bill and Andrea, common law, 7 month old son (RRT) (AB)*

Like BC and Alberta, benefits in Saskatchewan can also be withheld if parents are unwilling to participate in employability efforts (Schafer and Clemens 2002).

Since the early 1990s, fraud control divisions in each ministry have served as the primary surveillance mechanism utilized to ensure that parents are indeed maintaining the status of 'deserving' of support and are not defrauding the government. In 1994, Alberta's ministry introduced the Fraud and Error Control Program and BC introduced the Prevention, Compliance and Enforcement Branch. As of January 1999, recipients of *BC Employment and Income Assistance* benefits are subject to periodic eligibility audits in order to ensure they still qualify for assistance receipt (Ministry of Human Resources 1999). In contrast to BC and Alberta, Saskatchewan's ministry has not implemented a similar type of fraud division but has established a principle of accountability since 1996, which refers to such practices as audit and verification activities (Saskatchewan Social Services 1997). Since 1994, all three provinces have engaged in data matching across the ministries to reduce individuals' 'double dipping' of benefits.

Like the restriction and enforcement, the dimension of surveillance contains various strategies designed to ensure that parents' actions and behaviours are consistent with active assistance programming – moving parents off of the welfare caseload and into the workforce as soon as possible. The importance placed upon monitoring parents' maintenance of their employability efforts and, thus, their status of deserving of income support, also speaks to issues of social justice. Unlike the criminal justice system, where one is 'innocent until proven guilty,' each of the three ministries appears to be working according to the reverse principle, 'guilty unless proven innocent.' That is, parents are viewed as more likely to de-fraud the system through bad choices rather than engage in the 'good' choice of meeting the requirements of employability. The general assumption is that parents must be monitored in their maintenance of their employability because if a ministry avoided this practice, this would surely mean that parents would choose not to maintain their searches for employment and would take advantage of the system. A final, additional means by which parents' employability efforts are enforced and maintained is through the downloading and sharing of responsibility for active assistance programming with other ministerial departments and outside agencies.

Downloading/Sharing Responsibility

Tables 3.8-3.10 confirm the emergence of an employability discourse in the three social assistance programs over the period 1993-2004 simply by depicting the sheer growth of employment and training opportunities for parents on assistance. It is this growth in employment and training opportunities that also demonstrates the increasingly important role that the sharing and downloading of responsibility has played in the creation of parents' employability in each ministry.

Beginning with *BC Benefits*, the ministry engaged in a relationship with the then Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (now Ministry of Education) to provide training for Youth Works and Welfare to Work recipients (Ministry of Human Resources

1998). The ministry has since partnered with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Ministry of Health Services in the provision of other services (e.g. health benefits) (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2005).

Table 3.8: BC's Income and Employment Programs

1992/93-1996/97	Ministry of Social Services
1993/93	**Pre-Employment Programs:** Training and Education Allowance, Work Activity Projects, Job Action Program, Career Path Partnerships, Community Volunteer Program, Incentive Allowance **Employment Bridging Programs:** Work Clothing and Transportation, Day Care Surcharge, Workforce Entry Benefit, Earnings Exemptions **Job Creation and Training Programs:** Employment Opportunity Program, Employment Initiatives for People with Handicaps, Community Tourism Employment and Training Program, Youth Employment Skills Program, Forestry Enhancement Program, RISE Projects and Special Employment Projects
1995/96	**Welfare to Work**: provides adults access to work training, experience, and assistance with job preparation and searches **Youth Works**: mandatory job search and work preparation programs for adults aged 19-24 provided by the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training
2000/01-2001/02	Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security
2001/02-2004/05	Ministry of Human Resources
2001/02	**Employment Programs**: Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Work Connections, Employability Programs, Self-Employment Training, Workplace-Based Training Programs, Job Start, Jobs Partnership Programs (JPP)
2002/03	**Employment Programs**: Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Work Connections, Employability Programs, Self-Employment Training, Workplace-Based Training Programs, Job Start, Jobs Partnership Programs (JPP) **New Programs**: Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities, Job Placement Program, Training for Jobs Program Pilot, Confirmed Job Supplement Program
2003/04	**Employment Programs**: Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Work Connections, Employability Programs, Self-Employment Training, Workplace-Based Training Programs, Job Start, Jobs Partnership Programs (JPP), Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities, Job Placement Program, Training for Jobs Program, Confirmed Job Supplement Program **New Program**: Bridging Employment Program

Source: BC annual reports, 1993-2004.

In Alberta, both the ministry of Family and Social Services and later Human Resources and Employment have pursued options to share responsibility for helping out

Albertans in economic need with the education ministry. For example, the 1993 reform strategies created the possibility to share the provision of temporary employment programs and other initiatives with the Advanced Education and Career Development ministry (see Table 3.9) (Elton et al. 1997).

Table 3.9: Alberta's Income and Employment Programs

1992/93-1998/99	Alberta Family and Social Services (AFSS)
1992/93	**Temporary Employment Programs:** Alberta Community Employment (ACE), Employment Skills Program (ESP), Northern Alberta Job Corps (NAJC) **Shared Initiatives for Welfare Clients:** Job Placement Services, Training on the Job, and Enhanced Employment Preparation programs, provided by Advanced Education and Career Development (AECD) and co-funded by AFSS
1995/96	**Employment Initiatives:** ACE, ESP, Alberta Job Corps, Basic Foundation Skills (Upgrading), Skills Training (<2 years Post Secondary), Training on the Job, Employment Alternatives Program, Job Placement, Integrated Training; co-funded by AFSS and AECD **Other Initiative:** Canada-Alberta Service Centre 'one-window' serve delivery of provincial/federal labour market and income support programs, funded by AECD and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)
1998/99-2004/05	Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE)
1999/00	**Labour Market Programs**: Job Placement, Self Employment, Skills for Work, Training on the Job, Skills Development Program, funded by Alberta Learning, AHRE, and HRDC partnerships **Specific to SFI recipients**: ACE, ESP, AJC
2000/01	**Labour Market Programs**: Job Placement, Self Employment, Skills for Work, Training on the Job, Skills Development Program, Summer Temporary Employment Program, **Specific to SFI recipients:** ACE, ESP, AJC
2003/04	**Work Foundations Programs**: Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading **Training for Work Programs**: Job Skills Training, Self-Employment Training **Other Labour Market Programs**: Job Placement, Self Employment, Skills for Work, Training on the Job, Skills Training, Basic Foundation Skill Training interventions **Specific to SFI recipients**: ACJ[a]

Source: AB annual reports, 1993-2004.

a. As per AHRE webpage, 2005.

In 1995, the Canada-Alberta Services Centres were introduced. These centres provide 'one window' service for provincial and federal labour market and income support programs and are managed by a partnership between AECD and federal Human

Resources Development Canada (HRDC). As in BC, Alberta's introduction of children and health benefits also required partnerships with the Alberta Health and Wellness ministry.

The development and implementation of Saskatchewan's *Building Independence* programs also involved the sharing of responsibility with the government's education ministry. The Provincial Training Allowance (PTA) and Youth Futures programming, initiatives developed according to the Saskatchewan Training Strategy, are delivered by the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training (Saskatchewan Social Services 1998) (see Table 3.10). Since *Building Independence* is an inter-departmental strategy, the family health benefits administered through the ministry of social services also required the involvement of the Saskatchewan health ministry (Saskatchewan Social Services 1999).

Table 3.10: Saskatchewan's Income and Employment Programs

1992/93-2002/03	Saskatchewan Social Services
1994/95	**New Careers Corporation**: encourages employment and training
1995/96	**New Careers Corporation**: Bridges to Independence for Single Parents (pilot program introduced to help parents move into workforce)
1997/98	**New Careers/ Saskatchewan Training Strategy**: Youth Futures Pilot; Provincial Training Allowance (PTA)[a] *Social Assistance Redesign program*: Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES)
1998/99	**Building Independence** employment-oriented programs: SES, PTA
2000/01	**Building Independence** employment-oriented programs: SES, PTA, Jobs First pilot[b]
2001/02	**Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services** (separate to Building Independence initiatives)
2002/03-2004/05	Department of Community Resources and Employment
2002/03	**Building Independence** employment-oriented programs: SES, PTA, Jobs First, Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA)c

Source: SK annual reports, 1993-2004.

a. Youth Futures Pilot and PTA are delivered by the Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Skills Training

b. Service jointly managed with Saskatchewan Post Secondary Education and Skills Training

c. TEA is available only to individuals participating in Jobs First or anticipating employment in a short time period.

Finally, in all three provinces, new partnerships with outside, private sector or non-profit agencies have also been pursued. Through contractual relationships, these outside agencies provide employment and education programming on behalf of the ministries. For example, in Saskatchewan, the ministry introduced the Jobs First pilot in 2000 (see Table 3.11). This program was shared administratively with the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training but also involved the ministry funding outside community organizations to provide the actual services (Saskatchewan Social Services 2001).[40]

A final component of the downloading and sharing of responsibility dimension is the re-organization of the ministries themselves. One of the goals of replacing *BC Benefits* with *BC Employment and Income Assistance* was to streamline delivery in order to deliver services at 'less cost to the taxpayer' (see Table 3.6). This streamlining of delivery enabled the development of performance-based contracting frameworks which tie payments to outside agencies on the basis of the agencies' actual results. These results included successfully connecting clients to jobs and reducing caseloads (British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security 2001). By 2004, this streamlining of service delivery meant the concentration of the original nine regions of the ministry into five and the outright elimination of some public service jobs (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2004a).

As a result of reorganization of the Alberta Government in May, 1999, Alberta Family and Social Services was disbanded and its responsibilities were transferred among three ministries. Management and administration of income supports for adults was transferred to AHRE. This reorganization pointed to the new direction of prioritizing individuals' skill and training development. As justified in the 1999/00 Annual Report: "Helping potential applicants for *SFI* receive timely employment assistance rather than accessing income support, minimizes the difficulties of re-entering the workforce after a lengthy absence from it" (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2000: 57). In 2003, the Saskatchewan ministry was reorganized into five divisions to create greater policy and services integration in its provision of resources to individuals and families. Career and employment services became a separate division from the income security division whereas the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services Centres and the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation became new additions to the ministry (Saskatchewan Social Services 2003).

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[40] In British Columbia, over 15 outside agencies all over the province partner with the ministry in the delivery of the Job Placement program, Pre-Employment Services, and Planning and Employment Services (British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance 2005b).

To summarize, each ministry's enforcement and surveillance of parents' employability is exacerbated by the downloading and sharing of responsibility for the creation of parents' active labour market attachment. Compared to the preceding three dimensions, this final dimension of the creation of parents' employability has some other unique properties. At the same time that each ministry consistently stresses the need to eradicate individuals' dependence on income support, each ministry is also paradoxically creating webs of structural inter-dependency amongst ministerial departments and cutting across public and private sector boundaries. And, although these webs of structural inter-dependency are designed to achieve successful employment outcomes for parents, they also have less desirable outcomes. Parents' employability efforts are subject to not just one gaze - of the ministry responsible for social assistance – but several. Parents therefore must navigate the administrative requirements of several systems in their efforts to leave social assistance.

Political and Ideological Assumptions in the Creation of Employability

In Chapter 2, the literature reviewed revealed several researchers' predictions and observations of the fault lines associated with the emergence of employability as a social citizenship right to social assistance (see for example McDaniel 2003; White 2003). The results of this discourse analysis confirm the existence of some of these fault lines and even new ones too. These fault lines suggest specific political and ideological assumptions about parents' market relations and family care relations that underpin the discourse surrounding employability and active assistance programming.

The dimensions of restriction, enforcement and surveillance in the western provinces suggest a fault line associated with the Third Way rhetoric of 'no rights without responsibilities.' Creeping conditionality is evident in the social assistance policies of the western provinces, much like what Dwyer (2002) observes in the welfare reform strategies in the UK. This is exemplified in the following quote from the BC ministry: "If the person can work, he or she is required to look for a job or participate in a job placement or training for jobs program as a condition for receiving assistance" (British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources 2004b: 1). Tables 3.11-3.13 best demonstrate this creeping conditionality. Particularly in the provinces of BC and Saskatchewan, both of these ministries stress recipients' rights and responsibilities within their assistance policies (see Table 3.11 and 3.13). The Alberta ministry, however, is unusual in this regard. The current assistance guide only lists expectations of recipients. This is perhaps a reflection of its political history of prioritizing the value of individual responsibility over state support.

This creeping conditionality itself is underpinned by the ideological prioritization of both the individual and the market. Despite their apparent allegiance to the 'rights' of citizens in recent documentation, it cannot be denied that, like Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan also pursue an ideology of individual responsibility and, thus, uphold an ideal-type citizen in the provision of social assistance. Indeed, as the above discourse analysis reveals, the BC ministry has made the end of entitlement to assistance one of its primary objectives. In all three provinces, the ideal citizen is the employable, autonomous, self-reliant citizen who is not dependent on the state. This is a far cry from the post-war social citizenship rights regime or social contract that recognized that risks such as unemployment are structurally related.

Not surprisingly, the increased intensity associated with creating parents' employability, essentially by making practices like workfare normative – another fault line – confirms the paradigm shift from the social citizenship rights regime to the social investment citizenship regime. As a result of the dimensions of enforcement and surveillance, most evident from the mid-1990s onward, parents are obligated to metamorphose into an ideal-type citizen by participating in employment and education training programs which, in turn, constitute an investment in their human capital. In accordance with Giddens' Third Way thinking, contemporary risks are those associated with *lack* of skills, and therefore social programs are to be reorganized and restructured to correct for this lack.

The attenuation of the 'social' is another fault line evident in the conceptualization of parents' entitlement relationships with social assistance policy in the three western provinces. Initially, it appears that active labour market efforts trump need as a basis of entitlement to income support similarly across each province. Closer inspection reveals key differences in the extent to which this entitlement relationship occurs, suggesting that the implementation of the social investment citizenship regime can be fragmented and diversified across the provinces (see Tables 3.11-3.13).

Table 3.11: BC Assistance Recipients' Rights and Responsibilities

Responsibilities:
• To actively seek work and attend an orientation session during the three-week work search period prior to apply. These are application requirements, with few exceptions.
• To pursue any other income to which you may be entitled, for example, employment insurance benefits, workers' compensation, union or lodge benefits, pensions, veterans' benefits, or family maintenance payments • To first use excess assets and income before asking for assistance • If employable, to actively seeks work, and if required by the ministry, to take part in employment and/or training programs. You must be available for any job you are able to do.
• To have, or promptly apply for a social insurance number, and to provide the appropriate identification for yourself and other family members • To provide information and sign the application form
• To ensure that all information you provide is true and complete. Ministry staff check information on application forms and monthly cheque stubs. A deliberately false statement on either form can lead to disentitlement or prosecution.
• To inform your worker of any change in circumstance that may alter the amount or type of assistance for which you are eligible • To take personal responsibility for becoming self-supporting as quickly as possible
Rights:
• To apply for assistance when you believe you are in need. • To have the information and assistance you need to complete the application • To know what personal information is collected about you, and the chance to correct it if is wrong
• To have your personal information protected as defined in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act • To make a complaint if you believe your personal information is not collected, used or disclosed properly • To have your eligibility determined on the basis of verified evidence
• To receive all assistance and services to which you are entitled and, depending on availability, access to programs that will help you find work quickly • To be informed of your responsibilities • To apply for or receive assistance • To be informed about processes and decisions affecting you

Table 3.11 Cont'd.
Rights:
• To appeal if you believe your assistance has been denied, reduced or discontinued in error
• To be treated without discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political affiliation, sexual orientation or other issues
• To receive courteous, respectful, efficient and fair services
• To have service quality complaints appropriately addressed
Source: "Your Responsibilities and Rights," Ministry of Human Resources (2004:1-2)

Table 3.12: Expectation of Individuals Receiving Income Support - Alberta Works

Individuals with a Client Investment Plan are expected to:
• Look for work everyday
• Keep a record of where they looked for work, their applications, and interviews
• Go to any appointments that may help them find work
• Go to workshops or programs
• Tell their financial benefits worker when they get a job
• Try to increase their hours if they are working part-time
• Actively seek work with higher pay
Individuals receiving Income Support are expected to:
• Be honest and accurate about their situation, including how much money received each month, assets and dependents, and to report any changes in circumstances
• Seek employment if able to work
• Become [sic] independent as possible
• Apply for all available resources for themselves and their family, including child support, GST, and income tax refunds
• Use Income Support benefits for the intended purpose
Source: "Your Guide: For Expected to Work and Not Expected to Work Clients," Government of Alberta (2004: 4 and 39)

Table 3.13: Saskatchewan Assistance Recipients' Rights and Responsibilities

Rights:
• The social assistance program provides assistance to those in need as a last resort.
• You have the right to apply for social assistance.
• You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
• Social assistance is **not a loan.** When you cannot meet your basic living expenses with your own resources and you are eligible for assistance, you will be **given** the money.
• You have the right to live your life, to make decisions and to accept the services offered. Some decisions you make may affect your eligibility for assistance but they are your choices.
• You have the right to all monies and services allowed by law to meet your needs.
• You have the right to appeal decisions made by your worker.
• You have the right to have your affairs handled with confidentiality.

Table 3.13 Cont'd.
Responsibilities:
• Give true and complete information when you apply. • Read your cheque stub or benefit deposit slip carefully. It shows details about your allowance. Your worker can also use it to give you important information about your benefits.
• Report all changes to your situation to your worker while you are receiving assistance (i.e. getting work, move to a different place, marriage, separation, new baby).
• Try all the ways you can to support yourself and your family. This includes applying for other benefits (e.g. child benefit, GST rebate).
• Be involved in working out a plan that will help you to be as independent as possible. This may include: looking for work if you are able; taking a job or training course, when offered.
• Repay any overpayment of benefits you received.
Source: Social Assistance Handbook (2005: 4-5)

Time limits in BC and the harshness of Alberta's 1990s cuts are especially indicative of the intentional erosion of parents' social citizenship rights to support on the basis of need. In contrast, the Saskatchewan ministry appears to still retain some emphasis on need and less rigidly uphold parents' employability as a basis of assistance receipt. This is suggested by the absence of mandatory participation in employment and training programs (Schafer and Clemens 2002) and as of the 2003/04 annual report, the renewed interest in emphasizing goals of citizenship and social inclusion in tandem with income security redesign (Community Resources and Employment 2004).

The results of the discourse analysis also confirm another fault line discussed in Chapter 2: individuals' relationships with the institutions of the state and family are becoming increasingly fragile. In each province's redesign of social assistance as a program of 'last resort,' citizen-consumers must look to the family as the social safety net of first resort. The downloading/sharing of responsibility dimension does not just mean new partnerships with other ministries or outside community organizations, it also implies that social assistance recipients do have social support networks that they can turn to for support over and beyond what assistance can provide them. As Foster (2002) argues, once governments reduce public support for citizens in need through reduced benefits or the introduction of welfare-to-work programs, they download the responsibility for an individuals' support to other private sources. Aside from relying on family and friends, potential recipients can also draw on savings, mortgage their home, or turn to other outside non-profit agencies (e.g. food banks) or charities. This assumption of a social support network is evident in each ministry's push to 'make work pay' and the expectation that parents use all other resources before being considered eligible for assistance. Indeed, according to "Your Guide to Employment and Assistance" in BC, potential recipients are informed that the mandatory three week search for employment before participating in an initial intake interview "…gives you the opportunity to look for work and access other sources of support, such as family, friends and the community" (Ministry of Human Resources 2004: 2).

Finally, one last fault line is the existence of moral overtones in social assistance programming. The new neo-liberal emphasis on free market democracy and the limited role of the state has also involved adoption of much of the right's rhetoric – social assistance programs do create dependence. Hence, as suggested by the dimensions, those who are 'poor' are still targeted as a population in need of social control or moral regulation in order to eradicate this dependency (Piven and Cloward 1971). Again, the emphasis is not so much on recognizing structural barriers as partially responsible for the experiences of low-income persons but rather finding fault solely with their personalities and behaviours.

Aside from the practices of monitoring delineated earlier under the dimension of surveillance, one other example of the social control of low-income persons is the use of classification systems. In all three provinces, extensive classification systems have been developed and utilized over time in order to train the policy gaze on those most in need of regulation in order to ensure they meet eligibility criteria. For example, in 1995 a more dichotomous classification system of those on *SFI* was adopted: those 'unable to work' and those 'expected to work' (Alberta Family and Social Services 1996: 8).[41] Under *Alberta Works*, there are three rather than two categories of recipients accessing income support. In addition to the usual "expected to work" and "not expected to work," Alberta Works now has a category called 'learners.'[42] In Saskatchewan, the distinction of 'employable' and 'not fully employable' was introduced in 1996 (Saskatchewan Social Services 1997). According to the 2005 BC *Employment and Assistance Manual*, recipients can fall into two categories of eligibility, employment or no employment obligations (British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance 2005a).

Returning to Giddens' theorizing of the risk society, these dimensions do demonstrate that social assistance policy strives to create *responsible risk takers* who are capable of contributing to the global market place. The restriction dimension emphasizes personal responsibility for one's own financial situation, whereas the enforcement and surveillance dimensions emphasize parents' need to become easily transformative or flexible workers, learning news skills and succumbing to new education and training at the will of the global marketplace. The dimension of downloading/sharing of responsibility also emphasizes responsibility and reflexivity. Parents must become adept at juggling the expectations and regulations of multiple policies and programs. Finally, all five dimensions together highlight the risky experiences of workers in today's capitalist society – parents who will succeed at leaving social assistance are those who are willing to take risks and jump from the policy trampoline instead of settling into a safety net. Parents who fail to become responsible risk takers become dependent on the system and subsequently are seen as deserving the more punitive policy approaches that are utilized by each ministry to regulate their daily lives.

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[41] Recipients expected to work were placed in one of the three categories, supplement to earnings, employment and training, or transitional support.

[42] Those expected to work are either seeking work, working, or temporarily unable to work and need short-term assistance. Individuals with multiple barriers to employment or a chronic mental or physical health problem are not expected to work. Finally, learners are individuals who are recognized as needing training and skills upgrading in order for them to be employed (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2005a). Under Alberta Works, earnings exemptions of $230 plus an additional 25% earned by each working adult are maintained for lone parents and all family types who qualify as *learners*. A family of two working parents (expected to work) with children now only qualify for the $115 earning exemption, plus 25%. In total, Alberta Works is made up of: Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Health Benefits, and Child Support Services.

Summary

Political party differences have played relatively minor roles in the reform of social assistance programs in each province. Cutting across party affiliations, neo-liberal ideology has been a common justification for creating employable persons through assistance policy. It is through the discourse analysis of annual reports and public-use policy documents that it is further evident that parents are obligated to this orientation across the three provinces by similar strategies that restrict, enforce, monitor and share responsibility for parents' entitlement contingent on their employability efforts.

Three additional observations must be made prior to turning to Chapter 4. It would be remiss to conclude this chapter without noting that some positive changes to social assistance have occurred in tandem with some of the more negative ones over time.

For example, with the introduction of *Alberta Works*, families with children experienced a $20 increase in benefits regardless of whether their parents were classified as expected to work or not expected to work. Approximately 12,000 families also benefited from the ministry's decision to no longer deduct child benefit payments from social assistance benefits (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2003b). Other changes evident in all three provinces in varying degrees, such as improving access to health benefits and subsidies for child care, also indicate that governments are actively attempting to create positive "investments" within the social investment citizenship regime.

Second, the results of this discourse analysis should not be taken to confirm that the structure of social assistance policy does indeed determine parents' agency. Although parents' employability is sought after through the four dimensions discussed above, parents do resist the structural determination of their behaviour in a variety of ways. Parents are active agents in their everyday lives even despite living these daily lives in the midst of policy constraints. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to demonstrate this dialectical relationship between social assistance policy as structure and the agency of parents by answering the third and final research question of this study.

Finally, the intent of this study is also to explore another potential fault line associated with gendered assumptions about market and family care relations and how these shape policy conceptualization of parents' entitlement to social assistance. At only a cursory reading of the discourse, it is compelling to declare gender neutrality to the policy documents reviewed. In the creation of employability across the provinces, gender appears irrelevant. Very rarely are mothers and fathers named. The only exception is when mothers with children are discussed with respect to when they are expected to work. It appears that in social assistance policy, both women and men are perceived as equally autonomous and flexible in their relationships with the labour market. On the one hand, such an observation could be chalked up as exemplifying a liberal, unbiased view of individuals not oriented to biological sex, which many would say matches a contemporary social justice objective of creating equitable labour market experiences for women and men.

However, gender does matter. The conceptualization of employability by each of the ministries assumes that parents are better off working in the labour market. It is parents' potential *wage-work* that entitles them worthy of temporary income support. Such a conceptualization of work has gendered connotations since it is tied to the historical and social construction of the appropriate labour force participation of men over women. And yet, upholding an androcentric definition of work in assistance policy discounts and devalues the other work women undertake within the home. Since women on assistance are predominantly lone parents in each of the provinces, they experience their responsibilities in the home as barriers to their participation in wage work.

Moreover, as the bulk of research on women's experiences of gender inequality in the labour market suggests, women also experience different barriers to their employability within the labour market (e.g. gender segregation, income inequity) compared to men. When gender and whether it is present or not in social assistance policy is taken into account, the age old debate of 'gender neutrality' *versus* 'gender specificity' surfaces. Such a dichotomization is not inherently useful in this study. The declaration of a 'gender free' theme to policy discourse on assistance reform is too simplistic an account. Indeed, the question remains: How are policy shifts in conceptualizing social citizenship rights to social assistance subject to the processes of de-/re-gendering? I turn to answering this question in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

De-/Re-gendering the Responsible Risk Taker

In this chapter, I present the fifth and final dimension of social assistance policy that emphasizes parents' social citizenship rights contingent on their employability efforts – de-/re-gendering – and connect it to the literature on gender and citizenship. As discussed in Chapter 2, applying the lens of gender as a social structure requires examining structural changes to social assistance policy as gendered and exploring how parents adopt and construct particular gendered actions and behaviours for themselves and their family members that are linked to policy constraints. Gender is a social structure that influences parents' citizenship relationships with social assistance policy in the risk society. To remain focused on theorizing the gendered interplay between the structure of social assistance policy and parents' agency, this chapter follows the format of the preceding one, intertwining discourse analysis of policy documents with findings from in-depth interviews with parents.[43]

To contextualize the importance of gendering parents' social citizenship rights, I first establish the necessity of inter-linking gender and citizenship in discussions of welfare state reform by providing a brief review of key points in feminist research on this subject. I then introduce and provide evidence of the de-/re-gendering dimension and turn to a discussion of how the 'responsible risk taker' favoured within social assistance policy experiences processes of de-gendering and re-gendering at multiple levels.

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[43] Each of the three semi-structured interview guides I followed while interviewing parents contained the thematic section "Gender, Social Citizenship Rights to Social Assistance and Change" (see p. 289 in Appendix A). Although the way in which the questions were asked varied according to the gender of the parent and their family structure, all parents were asked two major questions: 1) how they thought their experiences as a parent (e.g. lone mother) on social assistance were different than the experiences of other parents (e.g. lone fathers or two parent families); 2) whether they thought they were treated similarly or differently in terms of getting assistance or being on assistance compared to other parents. The quotes in this section derive from their responses to these questions.

The Importance of Gendering Discussions of Social Citizenship Rights

One of the main sections of Chapter 2 outlined how the restructuring and retrenchment of the Canadian welfare state is paralleled by shifts in social citizenship rights. It also reviewed how various theorists (e.g. Jenson and Papillon 2001) have understood this transformation. Keeping with the intent of exploring parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance policy through the theoretical perspective of gender as a social strucutre, it is imperative to establish that the transformation from the post-war social contract (or social citizenship rights regime) to the social citizenship investment regime characteristic of the risk society, and its attendance effects on social policy, has itself been gendered.

Previous oversight of the importance of gender has become one of the major criticisms feminist researchers have made of traditional or mainstream models of citizenship and welfare states. As several researchers observe (see, for example, Fraser and Gordon 1992, cited in Baines 1996; Benoit 2000; Lister 2003; O'Connor et al. 1999), scholarly models of citizenship have predominantly favoured men. Marshall's classical approach to citizenship in welfare states only superficially mentioned women, failed to consider whether women's citizenship rights and duties are the same as men's, followed an overly deterministic class-based analysis that was gender and race-neutral, and upheld the male worker as an ideal-type citizen (Baines 1996; Lister 2003). Marshall did not discuss the relationship between citizenship and economic dependence within marital, familial relationships and also overlooked how certain rights for women, such as their suffrage (political right) or right to own property (civil right), did not evolve according to his typology (e.g. women gained political rights before civil rights) and actually occurred sometimes two centuries later than the granting of these rights to men (Baines 1996; Lister 2003; Walby 1997).[44]

Similarly, feminist researchers have argued that Esping-Anderson's (1990) classification of welfare regimes is largely gender-blind and starts from a male standpoint which focuses on the experiences of male workers with dependents as the standard case in the decommodification process (O'Connor et al. 1999). Although Esping-Anderson's approach is strong in terms of connecting social rights to wage labour, it is less convincing in its discussion of claims and rights on the basis of need, such as in the case with social assistance policy, and ambivalent about women's claims and rights on the basis of their status as 'carers' (Orloff, 1993: 317, cited in Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1994: 13). His more recent work does address women's employment or commodification and its implications for fertility and caregiving, but an emphasis on how class dimensions determine gender outcomes signals that an explicit gendered analysis is not his primary goal (O'Connor et al., 1999).

Feminist researchers have therefore 'gendered' welfare states in response to these mainstream (or 'malestream') analyses (see for example Baker 2001; Benoit 2000; Brodie 1997; O'Connor et al. 1999; Orloff 1996; Orloff 1993; or the edited collection by Sainsbury 1994b). In so doing, much of this work has therefore also gendered the welfare state of the contemporary risk society. Although a complete overview of such works is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is noted that such works cover a comprehensive range. For example, Benoit (2000) shows how welfare state restructuring changes women's market relations and family care relations and affects their social rights. O'Connor et al. (1999) analyze how social citizenship rights are upheld in social policies in Westernized countries (Canada, the U.S., Australia and Great Britain) and are a central component of connections between, and power relationships embedded within, the state, market and the family.

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[44] In Canada, suffrage was granted to female citizens who were British subjects at federal and provincial levels (except Quebec) between 1916 and 1922 (Hamilton 2005).

Along a related axis of inquiry, feminist scholarship has gendered the concept of citizenship itself. Attention has been drawn to, among other things, whether bases to claim state support are or should be gender neutral or gender specific, how specific norms of citizenship impact women's daily lives, and women's and men's different access to full citizenship and claims making (Baines 1996; Lister 1990; McDaniel 2002; O'Connor et al. 1999; Walby 1997). Other researchers point to how citizenship affects women's and men's market relations and family care relations, such as when market citizenship eclipses social citizenship (Brodie 1997), or when gender and citizenship are encoded so that men's wage earning is equated with 'independence' and a basis to claim support and women's lack thereof and participation in caregiving responsibilities is equated with 'dependence' and a lesser claim to support (O'Connor et al. 1999; Orloff 1993).

These works establish the importance of understanding how gender as a social structure characterizes the discourse of employability surrounding parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Prior to showing how this occurs via the de-/re-gendering dimension, it is useful to further review and contextualize one main point addressed in feminist scholarship on citizenship and gender:

the adoption of socially constructed, ideal-type models of citizenship and familial divisions of labour in social policy.

Gendered Dichotomies: Ideal Citizenship Relations within Social Policy?

Any policy that affects families, such as social assistance policy, upholds specific norms and values regarding family life. These norms and values are assumed to mirror women's and men's – mother's and father's – behaviours and interactions but are better understood as social constructions manifest in policy. The historical and social constructions of men's productive, *market relations* as distinctly different from women's non-productive *family care relations* are a crucial starting point to an informed understanding of the assumptions about gender, families, and citizenship in social assistance policy in the risk society.

The equation of paid work with the activity of males can be traced back to the processes of industrialization, which created a split between reproductive and productive functions performed by women and men in marital/familial relationships. With the advance of industrial capitalism, men's productive activity was removed from the home while women's non-productive (and reproductive) activity remained entrenched within it. Social acceptance of this bifurcation of women's and men's lives was due in large part to an emerging ideology of separate spheres that connected the differences in men's and women's activities to the presumed essential and biological differences between them (Boydston 1990). Women's reproductive capabilities were interpreted to mean they were better nurturers and caregivers in the 'domestic sphere' whereas men's strengths and competitive natures were understood to produce their better performance as wage earning breadwinners in the 'public sphere.'

This dichotomization of the roles of women and men created their differentiated citizenship status (Lister 2003). The patriarchal character of marriage ensured that it was men that actively participated in the productive, public sphere, which in turn, ensured their full citizenship status. However, men's full citizenship status was predicated on the exclusion of citizenship for women, despite the fact that it was women's activities in the private sphere that actually produced men's labour force participation.

It is tempting to view the sense of collectivism associated with the Canadian post-war social contract or social rights citizenship regime as correcting for women's and men's unequal entitlement relationships, especially as social policy evolved throughout the 1950s onward. By this time, feminist scholarship and women's movements were increasingly throwing into disrepute the inevitability and essentialness of an ideological structure of two spheres of society for women and men. The separate spheres approach was strongly critiqued for being overly myopic since even during the industrialization period women always engaged in some form of work, whether it be inside or outside of the home to ensure their family's survival (Bradbury 1993; Nielson 1990).

However, feminist scholarship also repeatedly shows that underpinning what appeared to be a slow progression toward gender equality in citizens' relationship with social policy were really gender-specific assumptions. Post-war citizenship was based upon a *false* universalism (Lister, 2003). Since full time employment or income above the poverty line were the usual precursors to individuals' social citizenship rights (Bakker, 1994: 6, cited in Brodie 1997), social programs were targeted at predominantly white, heterosexual, and able-bodied *males* who were temporarily incapacitated from participating in the labour market (Lister, 2003). While men were the appropriate citizen-workers with entitlement relationships in policy, women and children were dependent either on their partner's family wage or if lucky enough to be considered 'deserving,' social security (Baines 1996).

Many researchers therefore argue that the macro policies and social programs associated with the post-war Keynesian social contract rested upon a patriarchal/breadwinner model of family (Baker 2001; Bakker 1996).[45] The entire family was the administrative unit in terms of policy but the family was only entitled to government support through the inactions of men in the labour market. In two parent families, even if fathers neglected their duties to provide for their families, women and children were not entitled to public assistance in their own right (Baker 2001; Eichler 1997) and instead derived their citizenship rights through their dependence on male 'heads of the household' (Lister 2003; Sainsbury 1994a). A woman's husband was the "…undisputed master of the household, legally, socially, and economically" (Eichler, 1997: 9).

Traditionally, provisions of government assistance to two-parent families in Canada ensured the male breadwinners' family wage was supplemented. In prioritizing men in entitlement relationships, social policy assumed married mothers were financially stable due to their dependence on their spouses (Baker and Tippin 1999). It was only in the case of lone mothers' extreme economic need that they were entitled to income support from the state in their own right. Lone mothers with pre-school aged children and child care responsibilities were defined as unemployable and deserving of assistance either because they were widows or because they had no breadwinner to rely upon for their family's economic subsistence (Jenson and Thompson 1999). In Chapter 3, the discussion of the enforcement dimension revealed that in the early 1990s, before the major reforms within each of the three provinces, lone mothers were still viewed as having social citizenship rights as 'mothers' or 'carers' before their children reached the age of six (first grade attendance).

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[45] Several researchers argue that this model of the family was embedded in pre-1970s social policy. It is known by a variety of names, including: the patriarchal model (Eichler 1997), the male breadwinner/ female caregiver model (Baker 2001); the breadwinner model (Sainsbury 1994a).

In more recent years, the myth of two separate spheres of society and therefore the accuracy of the patriarchal/breadwinner model in social policy has been challenged especially because of women's dramatic influx into the paid labour market from the 20th century onward, their lower fertility, and the increase in dual-earner households (Luxton 2001). From the 1970s onward, Canadian social policy has increasingly given the appearance of valuing gender equality (or gender-neutrality) or the assumption that women and men experience similar social realities (O'Connor et al. 1999) and, thus, an individual/egalitarian model of the family.[46] Related to societal change in family dynamics and the principle of equality upheld in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Eichler, 1997), this model views both women and men as personally responsible for their own and their family's economic well-being and family care responsibilities.

Whereas women and children were men's dependents in the patriarchal/breadwinner model of the family, in the individual/egalitarian model children remain the dependents of women and men but women become interdependent with men.

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[46] Like the patriarchal/breadwinner model, this model has been variously termed: the individual responsibility model (Eichler, 1997); the individual model (Sainsbury, 1994); the egalitarian model (Baker, 2001).

In terms of social policy and programs, broadly speaking, the unit of administration is the individual (Sainsbury 1994b). For example, women and men have citizenship relationships with social assistance policy that are assumed to be similar. Both mothers and fathers have social citizenship rights to social assistance contingent on their employability efforts and dependent on the age of their youngest child.

And yet, Baker (2001) argues that policy makers have adopted a more egalitarian model of the family in social policy not only because of real changes in society but also because it enables governments to encourage women to become more self-supporting, thereby reducing the number of lone mothers dependent on social assistance. Lister (2003) warns that since eligibility for social assistance for two parent families is determined on the basis of a means-test for the couple as a unit, this test can hide women's economic dependence on men and their experiences of oppression associated with poverty. Here, then, lays the *gendered* paradoxes of gender neutral social assistance policy. The ideal able-bodied individual in social assistance policy, who can successfully exit assistance, is understood by policy makers and politicians as autonomous, flexible, and unhindered by family care responsibilities. This ideal citizen prioritizes market relations over family relations and, thus, is much more masculine than feminine.

Indeed, Lister (2003) argues that the gender neutral concept of social citizenship *was* and *is* gendered. Even in policy designed to include women in the public realm of society, such as social assistance policy, there are particular gendered assumptions about women and men entrenched within it. According to Lister, two constructs favoured by policy makers suggest conceptualizations of citizenship are dichotomized according to traditional, essentialist ideas about gender. The full citizen is the impartial, rational, independent and disembodied individual. These qualities have a particular affinity with individuals' market relations and, since historically it is men that participated more in the public sphere, these qualities are largely androcentric-biased. Any quality that is not compatible with the exercise of citizenship in the public sphere is relegated to the private sphere. Hence, the emotional, nurturing qualities deemed necessary for family care relations, those qualities historically attached to women, signify the non-citizen. Table 4.1 provides an illustration of Lister's (2003) typology of the distinction between non-citizen and citizen and how it is parallel to bifurcated assumptions about gender.

Table 4.0: Citizenship and Gendered Identities

Public, male citizen	Private, female, non-citizen
• Abstract, disembodied, mind	• Particular, embodied, rooted in nature
• Rational, able to apply dispassionate reason and standards of justice	• Emotional, irrational, subject to desire and passion; unable to apply standards of justice
• Impartial, concerned with public interest	• Partial, preoccupied with private, domestic concerns
• Independent, active, heroic and strong	• Dependent, passive, weak
• Upholding the realm of freedom, of the human	• Maintaining the realm of necessity, of the natural and repetitious
Source: Lister (2003: 71)	

Lister (2003: 71-72) argues that women therefore experience a classic double bind. They are banished to the private realm of the family because they are perceived to neglect the qualities necessary for full citizenship. At the same time, because of their contributions within this realm, they are further perceived as incapable of developing in such a way as to also contribute in the public sphere in a worthy manner.

Although not all researchers would agree that this typology absolutely characterizes the contemporary citizenship of women and men, many feminist researchers do agree and caution about several other contradictions posed by the apparent gender neutrality in social policy. The first of these paradoxes emerges in terms of ideas about family care relations. The individual/egalitarian a model of the family does have the potential to offer emancipatory (Baker, 2001) social policy for women but as Eichler (1997) observes:

> ...since *both* parents are assumed capable of fulfilling the care and provider functions, it follows that *either* parent is capable of doing both, and from this the conclusion is drawn that *one* parent should be able to do both. In contrast, under the patriarchal mode, only one parent was assumed to fulfill *either* the economic *or* the care function. Under the individual responsibility mode of the family, the ideological ground is therefore prepared for an erosion of public entitlements for substantial numbers of families, particularly-lone parent families, because the lack of recognition that one parent needs extra support in the absence of a the second parent (Eichler, 1997: 13-14, italics in original).

Eichler maintains that the failure to recognize that one person cannot earn money and care for family members simultaneously on a full-time basis is one of the largest faults of the individual/ egalitarian model of the family. This lack of recognition of the family care responsibilities of lone mothers on social assistance in the three western provinces is dramatically demonstrated by their mandatory participation in work and education programming when their children are still pre-school aged.

Gendered assumptions about work constituted a second contradiction of the gender neutrality pursued in social policy. Despite the fact that much scholarly research reveals that 'work' is a somewhat ambiguous term and can mean several things, including paid employment, domestic labour, emotional labour or caregiving (Hochschild 1983; Messias, Im, Page, Regev, Spiers, Yoder, and Meleis 1997; Rosenberg 1995), the most widely accepted definition of work in today's society, at least outside of the sociological realm, remains firmly connected to its economic function (Rinehart 1996: 5). "Real" work refers to individuals' engagement in activity to produce goods and services in exchange for wage (Messias et al. 1997). In a capitalist society, this economic orientation to work is practical and rational (Grabb 1997; Rinehart 1996). Moreover, the idea of 'rational economic man' who performs a cost-benefit analysis to maximize his/her utility in the market informs social policy designed in neo-liberal welfare states such as Canada (Duncan and Edwards 1997).

This definition of work as wage-exchange relationship predominantly exists within the purview of men. Thus, policy conceptualizations of entitlement are grounded in gender-specific assumptions. However, such a widely accepted definition overlooks the work of women's family care relations, whether within the home or outside of it. As Eichler (1997) observes, when lone mothers are perceived as 'drains on the public purse,' policy makers fail to see the 'work' they are doing managing their family care relations, work the state would have to do for more cost if both parents abandoned the care of their children.

Also at odds with the gender neutral approach in social assistance policy is the fact that historically symbiotic constructions of work and gender have retained a hold in Canadian society. Outside of or inside of specific policy constraints, women and men continue to experience unequal citizenship, even despite the contradictions that reveal them. For example, individuals' identification with a male breadwinner/female caregiver ideology remains a significant determinant of women's and men's experiences working for wages or managing family care responsibilities (Gazso-Windle and McMullin). In the paid labour market, women continue to experience occupational segregation and income and status inequality compared to men. In the domestic labour performed in two parent families, women engage in an unequal share compared to men.

To summarize, feminist scholarship consistently reveals that processes of both re-gendering and de-gendering are intertwined with the transformation of social policy and social citizenship rights in the broader context of the restructuring welfare state. Women and men are differentially connected to the labour market, have different family care responsibilities, and, thus, have different experiences of citizenship. Although women have made significant inroads in their citizenship development, they have yet to achieve citizenship status fully equal to men in Canadian society. Walby (1997) maintains that they have only managed achieving the rights they do have by leaving the home.

O'Connor et al. (1999) observe some of these inconsistencies in women's and men's citizenship when they point out that while women's claiming of reproductive choices, such as abortion, are an example of their citizenship that entails civil, political and social rights, one social right that is still elusive to workers who are not entitled to maternity/paternity leave under EI is entitlement to income support for family care relations, including child care or the care of relatives or others. Poverty, lack of time and money also curtail women's access to the political rights of citizenship (Walby, 1997).

It is therefore apparent that understanding the evolution of social policy as shaped by gender-specific and then gender neutral assumptions is far too simplistic. Even when social policy is designed with the intent of being gender neutral, assumptions about women and men's behaviour that perpetuate gender *inequality* still persist. And yet, to what extent do these contradictions emerge in social assistance policy in the three western provinces? Do parents perceive these processes of re-/de-gendering of social citizenship rights to social assistance? Do parents actually have particular gendered meanings they attach to changes in their entitlement relationships with social assistance policy?

In the next section, the fifth dimension of the creation of parents' employability is presented in order to answer the second major question of this study: How are policy shifts in conceptualizing social citizenship rights to social assistance subject to the processes of de-/re-gendering? Borrowing from the insights gained from the above literature review and the theorizing of gender as a social structure outlined in Chapter 2, the intent of this analysis is to show how parents' entitlement relationships with social assistance policy are bound up with dual and cyclical processes of de-/re-gendering occur often simultaneously. While social assistance policy may structurally and effectively de-gender parents' entitlement to provide care for young children over a certain age by pronouncing them 'employable,' parents can simultaneously hold personal, gender normative assumptions about mothering and fathering. In addition, parents' interactions with caseworkers and others outside of their relationships with social assistance policy may expose them to stereotypical ideologies about the appropriate paid and unpaid work behaviour of women and men, contrary to the apparent gender neutrality in social assistance policy. Hence, the social structure of gender infiltrates parents' entitlement relationships with policy at ideological, institutional, interactional, and individual levels.

The Fifth Dimension

The dimension of **de-/-re-gendering** refers to strategies and assumptions of social assistance policy that both de-gender and re-gender parents' everyday market and family care relations. The strategies and policy assumptions within this dimension are intricately related to those within the restriction, enforcement, surveillance, and sharing/downloading responsibility dimensions. The primary starting point for this analysis is a strategy introduced in the enforcement dimension in Chapter 3 – parents' employability is *enforced* through the restriction of the amount of time they can devote to caregiving activities while on assistance according to the age of their youngest child. What is different about the remainder of findings for this dimension as opposed to the others covered in Chapter 3 is that more attention is placed on parents' perceptions of the gendered assumptions in policy rather than actual policy documentation of them. Indeed, recall that social assistance policy is assumed to be gender neutral.

The dichotomous terms of de-gendering and re-gendering are utilized in this chapter because it is necessary to present these findings in as straightforward manner as possible. However, readers are cautioned that this dichotomization is false. This will become evident as readers proceed through the discussion of the findings, which attempts to fully explicate the cyclical nature of the de-/re-gendering process.

De-gendering/Re-gendering

The review of the existing scholarship on how gender intertwines with citizenship and social policy revealed differences in the gendering of women's and men's entitlement relationships (e.g. work equals paid work; familialization of care to the detriment of women). An unexpected finding of this study is the extent to which de-/re-gendering in social assistance policy in the three provinces exists *above* and *beyond* what is discussed in the existing literature. Initially, discourse analysis of the policy documents appeared to simply confirm a gender neutral approach. All of the annual reports are predominantly gender blind, with the exception of specific reference to parents' employability on the basis of their youngest child's age. It is when we turn to the level of parents' agency that an entirely different story emerges. The remainder of this section focuses solely on the several inter-related themes of the in-depth interviews to reveal the complexity of the de-/re-gendering process.

Across all three provinces, social assistance policy may appear gender neutral in promoting equal labour market attachment amongst male and female benefit recipients but underpinning this appearance is a traditional, male-oriented paid employment orientation to work and the simultaneous de-gendering of parents' family care responsibilities. Evidence of the de-gendering of lone parents' family care responsibilities surfaced across the interviews in all three provinces and coalesced into one major theme, the **disentitlement to care**. This theme refers to parents' perceptions of ideological beliefs about their market and family care relations that are entrenched within the institutional framework of policy within gendered ways and negatively affect their caregiving. For example, this theme captures lone mothers' belief that policy dictates their mandatory placement of children in others' care and the subsequent loss of their socializing role in their children's lives. In the case of lone fathers, this theme captures how they perceived that outsiders think their caregiving of their young children to be atypical or abnormal. Their disentitlement to care appears to be a result of policy restrictions but also gender normative assumptions that they are exposed to in their interactions with others. The subversive side (or re-gendering) to the disentitlement to care theme is parents' perpetuation of socially dictated appropriate roles for women and men.

Mothers in BC pointed out how it doesn't make much sense that their mandatory employability efforts begin when their youngest child reaches age five (re: time limits) and yet there remains a one year gap until their child starts grade one, during which they must pay for full-time day care. This one year gap interferes with how they would like to raise their children.

> When your child turns the age of five, you are supposed to be off of assistance because you are not expected to look for work while your child is under the age of three. As soon as they become three, that is when your two year time limit starts. By then your child is only in school part time, not full time, it's only part time. So, the daycare costs are still quite outrageous because it is still classified as full day daycare... So, you're paying full daycare costs for your child still. If they waited the one more year till they were six, they are in school full time and then it's just before and after school care that is required. And it makes it much more manageable...
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> I would prefer that until two years from now, when my child is in grade one. I'd prefer until she's six to be able to not have to work so I could raise her till she's able to attend school and then not be away from her in a time when I wouldn't otherwise be such. I wish that there was a way to raise my child my self... I had a child so I could raise my child. Not so I could send it off to somebody else and have to pay them to raise my child nonetheless...Well, one would assume that yeah, if I had to work it would not be for like I say another two years so my child could have the knowledge that mom is going to be there when she needs me. And when she's in school I can work because she wouldn't be none the wiser. I'm in work, she's in school. She's gone, I come home, I pick her up from school. And so be it. But nowadays, you have to do the, do it when you have to... But that child all day, everyday, is learning something other than your house, something other than you and other than your wants and beliefs. They're not learning your belief system and they're not learning your wants
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

Amy, a lone mother of a five month old son, especially objects to the caregiving she would miss if engaged in paid work outside the home.

> But like I could, I could go work a full time job or a part time job. But it's all a fact that I'm not raising my baby anymore, day care is. Like when, when you go to work those eight hours a day, your kid spends at day care. And those are the eight hours of the day that the kid is awake. So he spends most of his time with the caregiver. So like she's the one teaching him how to walk and crawl and talk and everything right. Not you. You just see baby before you go home and go to bed.
>
> *Amy, lone mother, 5 month old son (E-AC) (BC)*

Elizabeth, now part of a common law relationship, indicated regret that she had actually had to place her child in day care when her daughter was much younger and she was a lone mother.

> My whole cheque went to rent and the babysitter. I had nothing left. You know it was really sad. I was paying somebody to raise my child. Literally. So, that part was sad.
>
> *Elizabeth, common law, 11 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*[47]

Not surprisingly, Alberta lone mothers, who are expected to work when their children are six months of age, were even more vocal about their perceptions that their family care responsibilities were not seen as important in social assistance policy.

> I didn't want to leave him. Who wants to at six months? Like even EI gives you a year [maternity leave], and the Alberta government still gives you six months. Like, that's crazy.
>
> *Tracy Lynn, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (AB)*

Like BC mothers, they also felt that they should not be expected to work until their youngest child at least reached the age at which to attend first grade.

> Um, I don't like how in Alberta you have to go back to work when your children are six months old. I had to go back when he was seven months old. I, I believe every parent, if you're a single mother you shouldn't have to go back to work 'till your children are in school.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

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[47] I met Elizabeth and Ted at the Food Bank. Elizabeth had recently started working but had not yet been paid by her new employer and was still in the process of exiting social assistance.

For Kelly, she wonders how possible it is to achieve government agendas oriented at optimum child development if low-income mothers are restricted from being part of it. She doesn't agree that she's employable when her youngest is six months of age:

> [B]ecause that's a real big bonding age you know… I just think that, uh, if they gave them like a year and a half even… they're [the ministry] still telling them [mothers] that they gotta go out and work you know. And there's really two sides right. I guess they look at the sense well you got pregnant, now you have to support this child and, you know, which is true. But you know on the other hand, um, society's really pushing on having, uh, 'success by six' and you know everything. And I think that the parents should be around to help with that you know.
>
> *Kelly, lone mother, 5 children (E-FR) (AB)*[48]

For Saskatchewan mothers, even though their employability is not designated at a specific age of their youngest child, they are also aware of the trade-offs associated with the mandatory placement of their children in day care:

> I don't wanna rush into anything. I don't wanna put her in daycare right away and then losing touch with that and missing everything. That's what I don't wanna do. And at the same time I don't wanna be on welfare all the time and be you know raising her on welfare. I wanna get out and do something with my life.
>
> *Diane, lone mother, 7 month old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

The above quotes illustrate not only the de-gendering of mothers' family care responsibilities within social assistance policy, they also reveal mothers' own social constructions of what constitutes 'appropriate' mothering and, thus, point to the dual process of re-gendering. Mothers' reports that they are disentitled to care, in turn, perpetuates their stereotypical status as caregivers.

This interpretation points to the several levels of gender as a social structure (ideological, interactional, individual). For example, Chodorow (1978) argues that women's mothering is not biologically determined but rather historically and culturally situated and translated through their witnessing and experiencing of other women's or their mother's childbearing and lactation capacities. Women's exclusive mothering role and the gratification they receive from it are both strongly internalized and psychologically enforced. As Duncan and Edwards (1997: 30) observe in their study of low-income mothers, gendered moral rationalities – collective negotiations and understandings about what is morally right and socially acceptable – play a huge role in mothers' decision making regarding staying home to care for young children or engaging in the labour market.

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[48] Kelly is currently exempt from seeking work because she fled an abusive relationship.

For lone fathers, socially constructed, ideological assumptions about men's breadwinning capabilities also disentitle them to provide care for their young children while on assistance. Scott, a lone father who lives in BC and has a daughter who is soon turning three, found that he is not perceived to be capable of caring for her unless he returns her to her biological mother and engages in paid work.

> They [caseworkers] find me a burden... In fact, one of my workers even suggested that I give my daughter back to my ex common law wife, and then go to work to support her since I couldn't do it on my own without getting assistance.
> *Scott, lone father, 2 year old daughter (E-AC) (BC)*

The de-gendering of lone fathers' caregiving capabilities and re-gendering of their breadwinning is not restricted to their relationships with social assistance policy, or more specifically, their caseworkers. It also occurs via their interactions with others in broader society, demonstrating the tenacity of stereotypical beliefs about the caregiving and breadwinning of males and females. The following quotes from Brandon and Joseph exemplify this:

> Like most people when they see me with my daughter, it's 'oh where's the mom?' or 'you have your daughter this weekend' or 'you have your daughter today.' No, I have my daughter all the time. They don't, they don't make that connection that it's a full time gig.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

> [B]ecause when you go out with your own child and that, if certain people know that you're a single parent, they'll give you this strange look. You know like why do you got this child? You know, you're the guy, you don't have to look after it…But this is my responsibility and that, I'm being there. Not no-one else…Why is it so different for a guy to look after their own child?
>
> *Joseph, lone father, 8 year old son (RRT) (SK)*

Stephen states that just his actions as a parent alone mean he should be treated as equally as mothers on assistance, something that he perceives does not occur in BC. As Lisa's statement reveals, he is not alone in his assessment. These two quotes especially point to how parents can expect a sense of de-gendered equality within social assistance policy or other services to help the poor but actually experience gendered expectations.

> I'm doing the job, I'm doing the work that I'm telling you, you know, that I'm expected to do it as a person with responsibilities in having a child. Ah, and therefore I should be treated the same way…
>
> *Stephen, lone father, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*

> For instance in XXXX at the Food Bank, single dads can't get a lot of things that single moms can just because they're not a woman… For instance, if a dad for whatever reason had a baby under one, they can't get on the kind of funding which gives them diapers and food and milk and bread and stuff like that. And market eggs and cheese. Because they're men. It's specifically…'No we can't do it because you're a man.'
>
> *Lisa, lone mother, 4 children (E-AC) (BC)*

Over a decade ago, LaRossa (1995) observed the asynchrony between the culture and conduct of fatherhood.[49] Although a new discourse was suggesting fathers' increased involvement in the care of their children (and therefore a new 'culture'), LaRossa maintained that such things as women's primary responsibility for domestic labour and men's tendency to engage in 'play' activity with children over other responsibilities revealed that fathers' conduct was not equal in responsibility and time to that of the conduct of mothers. The voices of lone fathers on assistance suggest that even though they have adopted a full-time caregiver role, they are exposed to not only assumptions about their breadwinning but others' viewpoints that conform to this understanding of the asymmetry between the culture and conduct of father's parenting. Fathers' caregiving tends to be viewed as highly unusual, fraught with difficulties, and is perceived to be of lesser quality than the caregiving women provide. Joseph's explanation of his initial interaction with his caseworker demonstrates how he intentionally resisted these stereotypical assumptions about fathering to attempt to avoid the gendering of his caregiving responsibilities.

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[49] LaRossa (1995) defines the culture of fatherhood as norms, values and beliefs surrounding men's parenting. The conduct of fatherhood is the actual parental behaviours of men.

> I told them straight out, look this is my child and I will look after him. And that if you're going to cause me problems, I'll cause problems for you. And that was it.
> *Joseph, lone father, 8 year old son (RRT) (SK)*

The 'disentitlement to care' theme is linked to another prominent theme of the interviews – **male breadwinner/female caregiver.** Approximately 40% of parents (19/46) in some way spoke of their perception that social assistance policy is implicitly informed by a traditional model of family life – men work, women care.

> [B]ut, um with the two people being on SFI, the entire bureaucracy, right, in the offices itself still hold that attitude. You know, 'well go provide for your family.' It's not that simple you know, and I mean especially if you encounter a male worker or a male, um, Minister of Social Services. It's very well, 'I could be dead and I'd still do it.' Well, you've never been in my shoes, try again. And that's just it. It's really easy to say one thing…When you have a man and a woman, or a

> woman and a woman, whatever society says is okay now, one of them is expected to be the provider and one is expected to be the caregiver…
>
> *Doreen, common-law, 6 children (RRT) (AB)*

Doreen's thoughts imply that a patriarchal/individual model of the family still remains strong in Alberta social assistance policy (interestingly, she believes this model holds up for both homosexual and heterosexual families). Her statement also implies that the male breadwinner/female caregiver model is more appropriate for two parent families on assistance. Andrea, a young mother in a common-law relationship in Alberta, points even more fully to the assumption that it is men who should be working or at least searching for employment within two parent families. What is most unique is her statement "moms don't have to work" despite the fact that policy in Alberta expects lone mothers to work when their children are six months of age. This statement is followed by her explanation that her partner was expected to use day care for their seven month old son while he engaged in a mandatory job search.

> Moms don't have to work, and dads put the kids in daycare and have to work…That happened to him just a while ago…With um, Kim [caseworker] said he can't watch the baby, yet he's supposed to put him in daycare while he goes to the job finding club and then at Wind Dancer…She was saying to me that it's mandatory that he goes.[50]
>
> *Andrea, common-law, 7 month old son (RRT) (AB)*

Janice has experienced living on social assistance in Saskatchewan both as a lone parent and as a two parent family. She maintains that when she was on assistance with her partner, it was him, not her, who was more pressured to commit to employability efforts. Her experience echoes Andrea's and further suggests that lone and two parent families on social assistance are differentially expected to conform to traditional models of family life.

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[50] Wind Dancer is a non-profit agency offering support services to aboriginal people in Edmonton.

> Well when, ah, when we were together on assistance they always bugged him for a job search and stuff like that…They just basically wanted him to get off of assistance and provide for us and whatever.
>
> *Janice, lone mother, 2 children (E-FR) (SK)* [51]

One explanation offered by lone mothers for why fathers are expected to conform to breadwinning roles, regardless of whether they are lone parents or part of two parent families, is the gender-stratified labour market. Mothers in BC and Alberta pointed to the abundance of labour jobs as creating problems for lone fathers. Since a man could potentially earn a decent living doing labour, he is more likely to be treated 'tougher' on assistance.

> They [men] have it a little tougher than we have… It is easier for a man to get a job because he is a man. His income can be "X" number of dollars higher than a woman going for the same job, than it is a woman. It's tougher. A guy can get a construction job at the drop of a hat, and they pay what fifteen, twenty bucks an hour. Where a women, not a lot of women can do construction, so we're like limited on anywhere from minimum wage, which is eight dollars in BC, to maximum if they're lucky twelve dollars. So, you know, a male on assistance would have it a little tougher with the Ministry, you know, 'get a job,' even if it is construction because they pay better, than it is for a female.
>
> *Pat, lone mother, 18 year old daughter (RRT) (BC)*[52]

> [I] think that a lot of times too, single moms kind of get more of a break because a man can go out and take any old labour job. Whereas, you know a woman's not gonna go out and be able to bang nails or do this now. Like I'm, I'm very liberal, I think that a woman can go outside, she can do construction just as well as a man can. But, there you know, there are uh little women that *can't* go out and dig ditches and do this.
>
> *Paula, lone mother, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*

> [A] man can get more 'man' jobs, which are under the table jobs. Men can do construction, all that. In that sense, they have it better than us. Because we can't

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[51] Janice is currently exempt from seeking work because she fled an abusive relationship.

[52] Pat currently is on employment insurance but receives a top-up in income from income assistance.

> go get jobs, under the table jobs. We have to get social insurance jobs. Men don't, I've noticed. They can go get under the table jobs basically anywhere.
>
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

The last quote from Paula also introduces another theme that demonstrates the de-/re-gendering within the structure of social assistance policy. **Playing favourites** refers to parents' ideas and beliefs about the equal opportunities and treatment women and men experience on social assistance. Both Scott and Robert maintain that *BC Employment and Income Assistance* doesn't view lone fathers' caregiving kindly and treats women's caregiving more favourably. For Scott, his current experience on assistance has been so poor that once he finds work, he intends to avoid assistance at all costs in the future.

> I'd go out of my way to find somebody to watch my daughter in order to not lose my job because I know when it comes to the government supporting fathers with their children is not gonna be near as easy as, as me finding support in my own field. So, the men work, the mothers stay home with the kids, and that's the way they [the ministry] see things.
>
> *Scott, lone father, 2 year old daughter (E-AC) (BC)*

Robert believes that mothers and fathers experience similar social realities as parents but perceives greater favouritism of women with children on assistance than men with children.

> I think there's a lot of pressure on men to go out and get a job and to provide whereas it's more socially acceptable for women to be on the system and not pressured to go out and get a job. Ah, that's the difference I see there. Um, I'd like to see the system change and just talk to people as persons. Be referred to as persons or individuals rather than a sex because we are all equal, you know…Men and women face the same thing, absolutely. They have just as equal the struggles. Um, except that I think men, I think it's put upon men that they should be, you know, they should be able to be doing better, you know what I mean? It's more acceptable for a woman to be on assistance with her children than it is for a man. Because you know, that's a man's role. Why aren't you up and at work everyday? What's your problem? You know what I mean? And this man is struggling with his own issues.
>
> *Robert, lone father, 13 year old daughter (E-MC) (BC)*

Playing favourites is not just a male impression of social assistance policy. Two different, province-specific opinions emerged among mothers as to whether it is lone mothers or lone fathers who are favoured the most. The majority of mothers thought that social assistance policy favoured lone mothers over lone fathers.

> A single father has to push to get what he wants, and a single mother, I will willingly state even though I am one of those, a single mother who just goes, you know what, I'm a single mom, help me. A single father has to prove why he needs the help.
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

> I think the single mother will have a better chance of getting social assistance than if it was a, than if it was a couple because there's a mom and dad.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

In one unique (or negative) case in Alberta, Christine maintained that social assistance policy favours lone fathers because they are seen as being incapable parents.

> They [caseworkers] actually get more for them than we do as a single mom. Just because they're a single dad and a dad is not as good a parent as a mom is. That's just an old saying that's been around for years and years and years. And they should be given the aspect [sic] that you know what? Maybe there's something wrong with the mom and he is a better father than the mother would be. And to judge in that aspect is not fair...
>
> *Christine, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT) (AB)*

Christine's opinion may have something to do with the fact that there are fewer fathers on social assistance in Alberta. Marjorie Benz, the director of the Edmonton Food Bank, explains this is likely due to Alberta's booming economy and how it provides a variety of employment opportunities for men (Bencz 2004). Moreover, although no generalization to all parents can be made from one case, Christine's opinion seems to be hinting at the idea that a dad must be really in a poor economic position to need assistance. And, since caseworkers will tend to think he's not as good a caregiver as a mother, he will be offered more supports.

The 'playing favourites' theme also refers to lone fathers' perception that they experience double standards about their caregiving responsibilities in their interactions with outside services (or institutions). Lone fathers observe that there are many other services besides social assistance offered to mothers, such as lone mother support groups. This suggests higher standards of caregiving are promoted among mothers than fathers. If, as LaRossa (1995) maintains, fathers' standards of caregiving are dominantly perceived as contentious at the best of times, they can be excluded from outside support and, thus, improving upon their standards.

> [S]o there is like a double standard. It was definitely a double standard. There are standards for women and then there are standards for men... I come across it in the food bank, the Salvation Army...They actually told me that I didn't fall into their criteria of a single, of a family unit because I was a father and a son versus a mother and children. So I had to fight them on that and I actually won. They actually turned it around for me and helped me. But they weren't going to help me in the beginning and I got really upset. You know, what gives anybody the right to tell me what constitutes a family unit?
>
> *Stephen, lone father, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*[53]

> [W]omen have support groups and stuff like that for like single moms and shit like that. I've never heard of nothing like that for a single dad and stuff. I just have, I think they get more of the information than a man would maybe.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

Essentially when the standards of caregiving for mothers are set so much higher than those for fathers, fathers perceive mothers as being more 'deserving' of extra support.

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[53] When I met Stephen, he had been on continuous assistance (disability) for seven months due to having suffered a heart attack.

> I have a friend in the XXXX Food Bank. She offered to get me on with the Christmas Bureau, at Christmas time and she had me sponsored. And when I got there the sponsor came out and saw me and said no, no, no it's only for single mothers, no single fathers. And I really didn't see what the difference was, if I'm a single parent with my child on assistance needing help. It wasn't for me in the first place, it was for her. But I was refused for that. But even the child care services, like I said I get to XXXX and the support group is for mothers. It's the Mother's Shelter for Children…But it's basically for women, and I don't think that they would turn me away. But even, even just in all the names, it's automatically signified that it's for mothers.
>
> *Scott, lone father, 2 year old daughter (E-AC) (BC)*

Directly related to the dimension of surveillance discussed in Chapter 3, the use of the theme of **surveillance** here is to capture whether or not mothers are deserving of support. Specifically, this theme refers to how mothers perceive they must succumb to a negative and punitive monitoring of their actions to avoid being expelled from the caseload. Because lone mothers make up the majority of parents on assistance, they are often targeted as dependents who must be subject to some form of surveillance monitoring (Brodie 1997; Gilliom 2001; McMullin et al. 2002) to ensure they are 'deserving' of support. Of course, what constitutes 'deserving' is ideologically constructed. Mothers are exempt from engaging in employability efforts as policy deems fit.

As indicated in Chapter 3, social assistance policy in BC is the strictest of all three provinces in terms of restricting entitlement and enforcing employability through time limits. Lone mothers in BC experience this strictness as intrusive and constant:

> The single mother still has to prove yeah, I don't have any money, I don't have the father in my life, I don't have this and I don't have that.
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

> You have to prove yourself more or less to them, and if you can't prove yourself properly to them or to what they expect or their expectations then no, sorry, you

> can't do this or you don't get this, or blah, blah, blah. But you always have to prove yourself.
>
> *Brenda, lone mother, 4 children (RRT) (BC)*

> It's not a happy existence, it's not. I could not be any happier to be a working person now and the um, the idea of not having to rely on the government at all anymore. Because when you're on assistance, you are almost a nothing because they have the right to know everything about you. Um, nothing is private, nothing sacred…
>
> *Elizabeth, common law, 11 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

In Miranda's case, her participation in an education program while a 'learner' under the new *Alberta Works* program requires constant self-surveillance and surveillance from the program provider in order to avoid her being cut off the program.

> Yeah, because I, I'm very accountable. Like I have to be there every day and if I miss time I have, it has to be explained. Like it's, it's very um it's not if I miss a day they cut me off kind of thing. But I really have to, to be accountable to my case manager about what's going on and if I'm having a tough time I need to be like right there saying ok, I'm having a tough time, help me through it. Cuz like I don't, like they can put me back or I can redo a module if something happens, but I don't want to have to and I don't want to risk getting kicked off of it either because then I'm back on SFI.
>
> *Miranda, lone mother, 2 children (RRT) (AB)*

Some lone mothers in committed relationships not involving a shared household are aware that surveillance of their family structure occurs to pro-actively prevent their de-frauding of the ministry. Jessica's boyfriend does not live with her but they both know that he can be wrongly interpreted as her common-law partner, thereby creating problems with Saskatchewan assistance for her and her children.

> He's afraid to answer the phone, you know…he's got his own place but he's at my house all the time, so, you know he's afraid to answer the phone, he's worried about answering the door. If somebody shows up at the door at 4:30 and he's

> home, you know he's afraid to answer the door. He's ready to go and hide. I'm like 'calm down' you know.
>
> *Jessica, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (SK)*

In-depth interviews with parents also exemplify how the de-/re-gendering of social citizenship rights within social assistance policy is reflective of assumed gender relations that exist at institutional levels – the nuclear family – within Canadian society. **Two parents have it easier** refers to parents' opinions that two parents are better able to manage and negotiate market and family care relations than lone parents. By far the most dominant of all gender-related themes, approximately 47% of parents (21/46) across the provinces spoke in ways that implied that they held idealized, ideologically sustained, views of the economic situation and division of labour within two parent family homes.

> It's just they get more income than a single parent does. And it would be easier for them because you get more money, two people and more money....In fact it would be easier for the children with a mom and a dad around instead of just having the one parent.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

Interestingly, the ideal-type division of labour lone parents spoke of in two parent families did not necessarily conform to a traditional male breadwinner/female caregiver model but did include a heterosexual assumption about the nature of family life. Lone parents simply indicated that whoever works, male or female or both, benefits two parent families.

> In a two parent family, I don't see why one parent cannot be working. I really honestly don't see that unless there is medical reasons, for one or the other, if you know one of them is really ill then yes, the other has to be there at home looking after the kids because the person who is ill is not quite capable all the time. So, in situations like that, then you know I don't think that there should necessarily be a time line if there's situations like that. But if there's a two parent family where both parents are fully capable, one of them should be working. There is no need that both parents need to be home. Standard life, you know mom usually stays

> home and raises the kids, dads usually go to work. Well, in this day and age, yes technically, to actually accomplish something and get somewhere you have to have two incomes coming in to actually get somewhere. But, it's better to have one than none.
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> [If] there's two parents on welfare I can see one of them getting a job for sure or you know one out of the two has gotta be able to do something I would think and still not have that back in mind well, what's my girl doing or what's my kid doing or where is she? Because there'd be the other your spouse I guess taking care or you could split - one, one day job, one night job – and just be a lot easier to do the time scheduling thing.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

Nadine's experiences in a common law family confirm that it is easier managing market and family care relations when you have two people to do so.

> Um, I think the only thing that's really different is you have more personal support there to help you. So it's a lot easier to get by. Even to go to work, for one person to go to work anywhere.
>
> *Nadine, common law, 2 children (RRT-E) (AB)*[54]

Kelly, in recalling her own experience as part of a two parent family, also points to the importance of this personal support and how it is easier balancing costs associated with daily living.

> Okay, um I think it was being a two parent family was easier of course in effect that I had the help and support. You know, if I had to go to the store he was there you know. Um and, and with money, you know, it was a when things were going okay between us and with the money and stuff it was, um, it seemed to be enough to get by you know. Um, the groceries we still needed some help here and there but we were still making it. I find it to be much more of a struggle now.
>
> *Kelly, lone mother, 5 children (E-FR) (AB)*

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[54] When I met Nadine, she was engaged in paid work but still receiving a top-up in income from social assistance.

The majority of the time solo child care responsibilities are understood as creating more work for lone mothers compared to two parent families. Lorraine states it quite simply:

> She has it harder. She has to look after her children by herself.
>
> *Loraine, common law, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

Miranda confirms that a lone mother has:

> Lots of responsibility, lots of things to keep track of. Um, it's a little harder to, to work out the situation because of the extra responsibilities…There's, there's a lot of extra issues, that if I had another person in the home I wouldn't to have worry about.
>
> *Miranda, lone mother, 2 children (RRT) (AB)*

At times, it is because lone mothering is a solo exercise in full-time responsibility and can contribute to a sense of social isolation that the work is just that much harder. In Karen's words:

> You solely deal with you. You have to worry about day care, you have to worry about that I can't go to work today because my baby's too ill. You can't rest for a little bit, you can't rest for five minutes and think okay, well life is going to be okay in five minutes. No, you have to be on the ball twenty-four seven because nobody else is watching your back. Nobody else is there for you. It's just you. It's a scary thought.
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

Only a small minority of negative cases in each province (<5 parents) indicated that parenting was harder in two parent families than lone parent families. Reanne and Courtney claim that this occurs when mothers retain primary responsibility for domestic labour within two parent family homes.

> I think a two parent family is easier. There's more help. If you, if you are again, if you're in a healthy relationship. I know some people that are in a relationship but they're still a single mom because the dad doesn't do nothing.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

> And I, I was a single parent before him with my own children. It was different. I get a lot of support from him and with the two of us, it's half and half. It's not just me. And a lot of family's I see around is, ah, it's the woman who does everything and the man who does nothing, just sits there.
>
> *Courtney, common law, 7 month old son (E-MC) (SK)*

Mary maintains that the social stigma associated with two parents on assistance must be extremely hard to cope with, either in a parent's interaction with their partner and/or with outsiders.

> It must be just stressful because you know you've already got the label 'oh, why is he a bum? He can't work. There's both of you on it.'... I don't live in their shoes so I'm not about to walk a mile and judge them and go 'oh well, you know you could work.' You know that's so wrong. I wouldn't wanna be with a spouse and our family was on welfare. Do you know the stress that would be? That would be a freaking nightmare. At least I can close myself in my room and go okay I've only got this.
>
> *Mary, widow, 15 year old daughter (E-MC) (BC)*

Doing gendered parenting is a final theme that refers to how parents on assistance experience and perpetuate gendered assumptions about market and family care relations in their everyday interactions with others and social assistance policy. This theme manifested itself in rather unusual ways. There were few common threads among quotes from parents. However, taken together, they suggested that parents are indeed engaged in "doing gender" while on assistance. Viewing gender as an accomplishment or a product of social doings, West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that doing gender is an outcome of institutions and an ideological rationale for existing and forthcoming social arrangements. Individuals' do gender when perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities prompt them to understand others' behaviours as essential expressions of masculine or feminine natures (West and Zimmerman 1987). The concept of doing gender appropriately encapsulates the multiple levels of gender as a social structure and how it relates to parents' experience, and ownership, of gendered assumptions while living on assistance.

For lone parents in particular, the doing of gender surfaced in their explanations of how they felt their children were missing something from not being exposed to an opposite sex influence in their lives.

> They don't have a dad and they don't get that male role model... I don't like to say male role model, I like to say male influence because they don't have that. They don't have any males that are gonna influence male boys to do you know the male thing.
>
> *Brenda, lone mother, 4 children (RRT) (BC)*

> Well, I think the biggest thing is, I was a single parent with my son and he and I were pals. He would just lie around the place and that was great. And this time it's my little girl, and I don't know half the things I should know or what to do. It's a total different experience, and I do think that she's, she's turning into a, she's getting too much of a fatherly influence. She's not learning about being a girl. She likes squishing bugs, and you know, doing all the guy things… I don't, I don't do the make-up deal, so that's where her bigger sisters come in….I find that the daughters have to turn to their mothers for the role modeling and sons to the fathers, so, in a single parent family it's hard to be the opposite sex parent.
>
> *Scott, lone father, 2 year old daughter (E-AC) (BC)*

In these cases, parents were worried they were influencing their children too much or not enough in 'appropriate' gender roles. In one unique case, Tamara left an abusive relationship and has parented one daughter and four sons on her own for over five years. At first she explains that she intentionally works against gender stereotypes but later reports that she does include a positive male role model in her children's lives.

> It's just trying to teach them [the boys] at an early age, like, you can be full of love and you can be a good dad. You just have a mom but you can call me Miss Man. You know, they do actually, they call me Miss Man… I do my own fixing around the house, and I don't need a man. But I do have a positive male role model that does come and, like, pick them up and takes them to hockey games, football games and stuff like that and spends time with them. Yeah, and I baby-sit

> his son during the, from uh September to June. And he comes and visits during the summer holidays too.
>
> *Tamara, lone mother, 5 children (RRT) (SK)*

Even though lone parents on assistance have to adjust to wearing multiple roles in the family (e.g. mothers and fathers or vice versa), they still do gender in their assessment of others' parenting:

> I admire any dad that's a single dad… dads are more 'oh no, we'll be fine, we'll be fine.' They don't have that built in nurturing skills like a mother does. And I'm not saying that that's bad or good, but they just, they've learned to cope with that 'well, you don't like it too bad.' Whereas a mom goes 'oh you know, they're tired of eating Kraft Dinner three days in a week you know.' Whereas a dad will go 'oh shut up and eat it.' You know they don't have… have the creativity… They just go, oh yeah it doesn't match who cares, here it is. You know so I admire any dad.
>
> *Mary, widowed, 15 year old daughter (E-MC) (BC)*

> Well, for females, they're too easy on their children. And that is a proven fact because I see it all the time. And a single dad, especially me, and that, we're hard on our kids because we want them to succeed, to pass us and that. So, that's where the balance has to come. And because that's when you need a female, and a male, together with their one child, how many children, because we need the sensitive and we need the hard nose. And that, but it's harder for a dad to show that sensitivity than it is for a female. And, for the female to show that, the iron hand to the child.
>
> *Joseph, lone father, 8 year old son (RRT) (SK)*

Comparing her experiences to those of a lone father's, Tracy Lynn maintains she experiences a similar reality. And yet, although "he's no different," he is presumed to eventually be able to "go back to work."

> He's no different than me. And hurray, for making an effort. He's looking after his kids and doing what has to be done for that moment you know maybe he only needs assistance for a little while like you know and then he can go back to work.
>
> *Tracy Lynn, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (AB)*

In sum, parents' social citizenship rights to assistance are de/re-gendered in a variety of ways. This gendering is not just structurally imposed but also occurs as a result of their interactions with policy, caseworkers, other individuals, and their own internal beliefs about gender. Parents interpret gendered assumptions within social assistance policy across the three provinces and yet also perpetuate them by holding socially constructed images of the family or adopting stereotypical assumptions about differences in men's and women's parenting.

Making *Gendered* Sense of Western Social Assistance Policy

The dimension of re-/de-gendering makes it apparent that the creation of responsible risk takers within social assistance policy occurs with gendered consequences in complex ways. It confirms that gender is a powerful determinant of policy structures and affects parents' entitlement relationships within the social citizenship investment regime of the risk society. In particular, the results presented for this dimension supplement and build upon existing scholarly observations about the inter-relationship among gender, citizenship and social policy.

Lister (2003) maintains that, internationally, lone mothers are increasingly viewed as 'citizen-workers' rather than 'citizen-carers' in their relationships with social policy. The findings of this study confirm that this indeed the case for social assistance policy in the three provinces. At face value, this emphasis on the citizen-worker suggests that a gender neutral, individual/egalitarian model is prioritized more fully than the past gender specific, patriarchal/breadwinner model in policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights to social assistance. Beneath the surface, however, social assistance policy remains deeply gendered. For example, citizen-workers are 'real' workers, in the sense of the traditional wage-exchange, male-oriented definition of work.

Other researchers maintain that since care for young children is no longer recognized as a condition of support (Shaver 2001), gender neutral social assistance policy has de-gendered and disentitled women's caregiving responsibilities as a basis to claim assistance (Brodie 1996a; Mosher 2000). Building upon the paradox created by the individual/egalitarian model's assumptions about care, this study confirms that gender neutrality in social assistance policy erodes lone mothers' caregiving as a basis of entitlement and serves to consolidate it as a 'private' matter. In the case of two parent families, gender specific assumptions also exist beneath the guise of gender neutral social assistance policy. Women are still seen as primary providers of family care. Moreover, policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights on the basis of employability for women and men do not alleviate the gendered division of labour in the home. The assumed gendered nature of family care is suggested by the few other policy mechanisms to aid women in this work, such as affordable, quality child care services. Even if social provisions for care, such as child care subsidies, are provided in the best interests of individuals, they do little to alleviate or deny the ideological assumptions about who should do the caring – women (McKie, Bowlby, and Gregory 2001)

McDaniel (2002) explains that in the neo-liberal welfare state, with its emphasis on economic rationalism, ensuring competitiveness in global trade and industry, and 'free market' individualism, caring is overwhelmingly considered as private, familial and altruistic. When caring relations are needed by individuals, the state assumes that family members will provide them (Baines et al. 1992; Leira 1994; McDaniel 2002). Hence, all five of the dimensions that create parents' employability point to this familialization of care. For example, cuts to benefits and stricter eligibility requirements mean that social assistance programs assume that individuals can depend on family members' care to ensure their participation as independent citizens in the public sphere (Lister 1990; McDaniel 2002). As observed in Chapter 2, the familialization of care, in turn, is one negative outcome of the individualization of choice and, thus, the reduction of welfare state supports in the risk society.

Moreover, the de-/-re-gendering dimension demonstrates how the emphasis on employability as a condition of benefit receipt over-shadows, undermines, and de-genders lone fathers' claims to assistance on the basis of their caregiving responsibilities. The disentitlement to care theme shows that when social citizenship rights as workers are prioritized over other rights to social assistance, caring labour within the home indeed becomes hidden for both mothers and fathers. Like mothers, fathers also perceive the invisibility of their care relations in social assistance policy – the fact that they are actually caring for their children is not something that is socially recognized as requiring public, state support.

Previous scholarship has revealed how lone mothers are targeted as problematic 'dependents' on state support (Brodie 1997; McMullin et al. 2002). The findings of this study build upon this finding still further by showing how parents interpret social assistance policy as gendered and actually do gender and/or self-surveillance in their interactions with both policy caseworkers and family members. In addition, parents' voices also reveal that gender ideologies filter into social assistance policy. Parents perceive a dominant male breadwinner/female caregiver model of family life is upheld in social assistance policy, to the point that women's caregiving is treated more favourable as basis of entitlement and double standards of caring behaviour are held for women and men. Parents are therefore exposed to structural constraints of gender via social assistance policy. Across the three provinces, parents are expected to engage in employability efforts when their child reaches a particular age. However, as the in-depth interviews indicate, parents, lone parents especially, are assumed to be female. Thus, lone fathers are subject to stereotypical assumptions about their caregiving and breadwinning and so feel that they are treated very differently than mothers on assistance.

The de-/re-gendering of parents' entitlement relationships mirrors gender relations at the broader, macro level of society. Parents have gendered identities that affect how they perceive their experiences on social assistance, such as the expectation that they should seek work, and their interactions with others. The creation of responsible risk takers through social assistance policy may be able to shape parents' new attitudes toward engagement in the market but these and pre-existing attitudes about market and family care relations are informed by notions about gender appropriate behaviour.

Hence, this chapter undoubtedly reveals the complexity of the process of de-/re-gendering of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance and how it intertwines with the structure/agency dialectic that affects individuals' everyday lives. Two excellent examples suffice to further stress this point. Structurally, lone mother's caregiving is disentitled and *de-gendered* when their employability is enforced through social assistance policy regulations. However, the majority of parents interviewed perceived social assistance policy as perpetuating assumptions about women's caregiving and even favouring women's agency in this regard, thereby *re-gendering* their entitlement relationships. The second example is specific to lone fathers and builds upon the theme of playing favourites. Social assistance policy favours mother's caregiving over father's caregiving at the same time that father's breadwinning is re-gendered. The following quote from Stephen best exemplifies the complexity of this process:

> [T]he welfare system is primarily set up to help the mothers, the women of families that are broken up and not the fathers. There's an expectation that the father should be able to take care of themselves and go to work. And when that isn't true, they get treated sort of badly. They get lots of roadblocks put in front of them so that they don't, um, get as equal portion....
>
> *Stephen, lone father, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*

Summary

The social citizenship investment regime's conceptualization of social citizenship rights – employability as a basis of entitlement to social assistance – is a deeply gendered phenomenon. Despite the apparent guise of gender neutrality in social assistance policy, women and men experience citizenship entitlements unequally. The findings of in-depth interviews suggest that depending on one's gender, certain parameters of active social assistance policy matter more. For example, fathers' presumed capabilities of breadwinning mean that investing in their human capital seems to take priority over investing in their young children's well-being (re: fathers' reports of being disentitled to care). For lone mothers, policy may appear to permit caregiving of young children for longer periods of time since this has been a traditionally acceptable phenomenon. However, this is now at the cost of mothers' increasing awareness that to be a good mother is to be active within in the paid labour market and the home.

The fifth dimension does illustrate a fault line associated with the social investment citizenship regime in the risk society –entitlement relationships with social assistance policy are deeply gendered and have gendered effects within parents' everyday lives. Indeed, choosing between gender specific and gender neutral policy models has failed to alleviate or accommodate the complexity associated with individuals' gendered lives. Restructuring and globalization have changed individuals' relationships with policy and the structure of policies themselves. However, there is still much work to be done to account for gender when thinking about these changes. This line of thought is important to continue but the more suitable place for doing so is in Chapter 6. Now, it is more important to further delve out what living on assistance means for parents, especially given the five dimensions.

Indeed, this fifth dimension of de/re-gendering also connects to each of the dimensions discussed in Chapter 3. Specifically, the fifth dimension points to gendered complexities parents can experience in the restriction, enforcement and surveillance of their employability. Gender-blind assumptions about paid work are at odds with family care responsibilities which, in turn, are difficult to juggle with participation in work and education programming. Moreover, the responsible risk taker who does make the leap into the labour market does so with the knowledge that their family care responsibilities are largely de-gendered and therefore hidden and less worthy of state support. The extent of these complexities, especially the indication of a mismatch between policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights and their actual market and family care relations, is the phenomenon explored in detail next.

Chapter 5

Social Assistance Policy and Everyday Lives

In the previous two chapters, the political and ideological assumptions and processes of re-/de-gendering that underpin the shift toward employability as a basis of citizen entitlement were revealed. It was established that parents' market and family care relations are shaped by how their citizenship rights are conceptualized in western social assistance policy – the ideal citizen is the responsible risk taker; market participation is more important than caregiving responsibilities. This finding answers part of the final research question of this study, confirming that the emphasis on employability shapes parents' market and family care relations in particular ways.

This chapter will answer the remainder of this research question, which also asks whether policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights conflict with their actual market relations and family care relations. In so doing, the objective is to further demonstrate the dialectical relationship between social assistance policy as structure and the agency of parents by revealing more fully the results of the thematic analysis of in-depth interviews. To contextualize the current experiences of parents on assistance, I first review how social reproduction theory understands the balancing of market and family care relations by parents in paid work.

Conceptualizing and Theorizing Parents' Socially Reproductive Relations

Parents' market relations and family care relations are not separate from one another and instead are distinctly linked. Family care relations are affected by structural forces within the welfare state (Daly and Lewis 2000), namely changes in entitlements to social assistance and labour market participation. In turn, caring relations also structure parents' relationships to markets and states (McDaniel 2002), such as parents' participation in paid labour and or usage of social assistance.

Parents' participation in market and family care relations transcends the ideological notion of 'separate spheres' of society. This work (predominantly women's work) of meeting care and economic needs to maintain life on a daily and generational basis, is known by many feminist researchers as social reproduction (Fox and Luxton 2001). Fox and Luxton (2001) argue that family life itself is constituted by these relations of social reproduction. Laslett and Brenner (1989: 382-383, cited in Lorber 1994: 174) explain:

> Among other things, social reproduction includes how food, clothing, and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, the ways in which the care and socialization of children are provided, the care of the infirm and elderly, and the social organization of sexuality. Social reproduction can thus be seen to include various kinds of work – mental, manual, and emotional – aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined care necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation.

Several researchers concur that women's family care relations (e.g. preparing food, providing care, socializing children) socially reproduces daily life for family members and, in particular, enables men to engage in paid work (see for example Grabb 1997; Hartmann 1981; Lorber 1994; Luxton 2001; Messias et al. 1997). Indeed, it is common knowledge that women and men are unequally responsible for social reproduction. Recall that in Chapter 4, the unequal paid and unpaid work experiences of women and men were introduced as contrary to the gender neutral approach in social assistance policy. One area in which this inequity in social reproduction is especially revealed is the study of work/family conflict.

The Difficulties of Balancing Market and Family Care Relations

For parents in paid work, conflict manifests itself in a variety of negative outcomes associated with how they negotiate, balance, and manage the demands of their paid work and domestic labour responsibilities (Duxbury, Higgins, and Lee 1994). A general consensus has emerged that although women now spend more time working for pay than in the past, they still retain primary responsibility for domestic labour. Compared to men, women more often experience a time crunch that often involves balancing the demands of their paid work with a 'second shift' in the home (Hochschild 1989; Jackson and Scott 2002; Kamo 1988). Both women and men who engage in paid work can experience 'overload' when they become physically and emotionally unable to meet the conflicting demands (Duxbury et al. 1994). 'Spillover' or 'interference' are two comparable outcomes that refer to how family care responsibilities can hinder work performance through tardiness or absenteeism, or how work experiences can negatively affect performance of family care (Crouter 1984; Duxbury et al. 1994; Skrypnek and Fast 1996). Experiences of overload and interference, in turn, are related to experiences of work-related or family-related stress or even mothers' psychological distress (Rosenberg 1995; Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999).

Socially reproducing the necessities of family life can involve none, one, or all of these negative outcomes. This understanding of family life as involving potential conflicts provides the necessary contextualization for the analysis of whether parents' social citizenship rights to assistance on the basis of their employability efforts match or contradict their everyday life activities in the market and care. While parents on assistance may not be involved in paid work *per se*, they must pursue paid work as an avenue to become self-sufficient once designated as 'employable.' Alternatively, they must consider the future pursuit of paid work if designated as temporarily exempt from work due to the age of their youngest child or for other reasons, including health problems. Each of these activities occurs at the same time that they are responsible for rearing and providing for their children.

Swift and Birmingham's (2000) study of lone mothers' experiences and perceptions of Ontario welfare reforms confirm that lone mothers are not just 'sitting at home.' Parents on assistance share similar negotiations of demands with parents engaged in paid work or full-time caregiving. Their everyday lives are characterized by a constant flow between public and private spheres. And yet, as Albelda (2001: 120) explains, parents on assistance also have different experiences of work/family conflict:

> The work/family demands faced by a soccer mom and by women on or leaving welfare are not all that different – except that the welfare (or, more likely, the former-welfare) mother doesn't have the soccer mom's resources for juggling work and family, and probable has a lot less flexibility at work as well.

For parents on assistance, work/family conflict is exacerbated by several barriers, which are often compounded by the policy constraints associated with the welfare-to-work orientation of social assistance programs. The most consistent of these barriers include: lack of ancillary supports such as transportation and child care (Albelda 2001; McMullin et al. 2002); low education levels and limited employment skills or histories (McMullin et al. 2002); mental health problems and substance abuse (Lichter and

Jayakody 2002); domestic violence; and inability to move for employment (Corcoran, Danzinger, Kalil, and Seefeldt 2000). Given these barriers, lone mothers on assistance are faced with a major dilemma: 1) to be a good citizen and go to work, thereby meeting employability expectations placed upon them and improving their economic situations; or 2) to stay at home and provide their children with maternal and emotional resources, a decision that is often linked to their own and society's constructions of 'good' mothers (Baker and Tippin 2002; McMullin et al. 2002; Seguino and Butler 1998).

The social reproduction and work/family conflict of parents on assistance in the western provinces is the focus of the next two sections. Table 5.0 provides a visual 'road-map' of the major themes that will be discussed to highlight the interview findings within these sections.

Table 5.0 Major Themes According to Sections

The Doings of Parents - A Perfect Match? • we *are* active employables • it's not *work* but it's full time ***The Hint of Conflict*** ***The Emphasis on Employability*** • half and half ***A Right or Not a Right?*** • rights are not necessarily for me
The Work/Family Conflict of Parents on Assistance • time crunch • overload • interference ***Barriers to Being 'Employable'*** • health-related barriers (i.e. anxiety, depression, addiction) • income-related barriers (i.e. not enough to live on, transportation, housing) • human capital barriers (i.e. lack of skills/training, education, work experience, available work hours) • child care responsibilities • systemic racism (i.e. race matters)

Table 5.0 Cont'd.
Living According to Policy Constraints • rush, push - pull! • jumping through them hoops

The 'Doings' of Parents – A Perfect Match?

Social assistance policy's imposition of assumptions and strategies to create responsible risk takers occurs at the same time that parents live out their everyday lives. As the general rhetoric surrounding individuals on assistance would have many people believe, parents on assistance are not doing much of anything but being lazy and dependent on the state. Since one primary interest of this study is how policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights stack up against parents' actual market and family care relations, it made sense to find out what the social reproduction looked like in parents' lives or what they were actually doing while living on assistance. Parents were directly asked to generally describe the activities they do in a typical day and then more specifically asked about their family care responsibilities and participation in work and education programming (see Appendix A, interview guide).

Two themes emerged across the interviews: we *are* active employables; it's not *work* but it's full-time. The theme **we *are* active employables** refers to approximately 48% of parents (22/46) who reported that they are they are seeking employment, have sought employment, and are motivated to work.

> But I do looked for work, drop resumes off, use my mouth all the time. I'm always like I need a job, I will work. So…I would say about three, I would say

> about three days a week. At least three to four days a week I try and get out there and somehow hand out resumes. Or get out there and say okay, I need a job please.
>
> *Brenda, lone mother, 4 children (RRT) (BC)*

> I don't stress, but I do look for a job. I spend five hours a day on, looking for a job either by phone calls, by e-mail, by Internet, by whatever. And I do it, and I know I'm doing it, and I know I am looking. I make it part of my day. I have to do it cuz I do want a job. I'm not gonna laze around and go whoo hoo I'm on welfare. Or whoo hoo I don't have a job and I have no money coming in.
>
> *Doreen, common law, 6 children (RRT) (AB)*

Interestingly, some mothers who were not expected to work also did seek it. For example, although Kara's youngest child is under the age of three, meaning she is exempt from seeking work in BC, she has gradually begun to pursue employment.

> The Ministry has not contacted me regarding going back to work at all, but I am at the point personally where I would like to go back to work. So, I have actually started kind of scouting around, what's out there.
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

Despite the fact that her seven year old son has special needs and she is not expected to work because of the time necessary for his care, Heather believes that with training she is capable of going back to work. Once she contacted the ministry, she received a form letter designated for all 'expected to work' benefit recipients. What surprised her about receiving the letter was that it was more threatening than she would have liked. Baker and Tippin (2002) explain that such practices are interpreted by mothers as characteristic of policy's inflexibility. For Heather, the lack of recognition that she wanted to go back to work before being told to do so was disheartening.

> [Like] well, I kind of said well, listen I'm ready to go back to school now and get a different kind of work. Like retrain me. So I've been in the process lately of taking workshops to find out what I wanna do…I kind of initiated this whole thing. I told them [the caseworkers] listen I'm tired of being at home. And they,

> they sent me this letter and I wasn't impressed with the SFI letter. But someone told me don't be offended cuz it's just a form letter that basically said come at this time, come on this day, if you don't show up your SFI benefits are in jeopardy. Like I didn't like the tone of that letter at all. It was horrible…I had to go to a workshop and or go to see a career counsellor and that was the letter they sent me for the appointment for the career counsellor. And I wasn't impressed with that. I initiated it. Why are they saying? That's not fair.
>
> *Heather, lone mother, 2 children (E-FR) (AB)*

Some parents (57%; 26/46) were not involved in work and education programming because they were exempt from seeking work due to the age of their youngest child or other health and disability issues. They described their typical day as spent primarily caregiving and maintaining a home. The theme **it's not *work* but it's full time** captures how these parents were not engaged in paid work but did experience family care work that took up the bulk of their time during the day. The following quotes from lone parents illustrate the kinds of work they do during the day (e.g. preparing meals, entertaining/playing with children). The quote from Brandon especially illustrates how often this work can be taken for granted.

> Uh, well, it's structured. We have breakfast, uh, usually he's asking me for several things in concession. You know, milk and something to eat, and cartoons. So it's a series of questions. And they get met. Um, once that's done ah, we may go for a walk. We may not. We might just stay in the house and watch t.v., ah, depending on what's on and what time. Um, we don't go out a lot, out, outside a lot. Probably about 30% of the time, but a typical day is just routine. Just getting up, eating breakfast, uh, he plays with his toys and I make lunch, and then he plays with his toys, and then I make supper and we watch, you know, a series of shows and then he goes to bed.
>
> *Stephen, lone father, son (E-D) (BC)*

> Well, I've got my dishes in the morning. Start my laundry in the morning. My dishes and my laundry I do all day long. Every naptime I do a round of toys because, um, my house is only cleaned twice a day when he's [her child] sleeping. Um, I do the average cleaning that everyone does. I mop my floor every second day. I sweep every night. I do my laundry every day. Clean up Jason's room once a week. The housework is just all day long.
>
> *Justine, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC)(AB)*

> I'm up at six. Breakfast for the kid. Bath for junior and myself. And usually get her on her way with whatever she's doing for the day. Friends and stuff. And laundry, household stuff. Uh, usually not every day, every couple of days I like to put in an application form or resume here and there. And then between mealtimes she just soaks up a lot of time that five year old. So that, that's a day. And then by eight o'clock, eight-thirty it's, it's her bedtime and I get a couple hours to myself before I start settling down I guess. Um, sounds pretty boring. I never thought about it like that before.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

For both Reanne and Courtney, parents who are not expected to seek work because of health problems (see Appendix B), full-time family care relations also encompass other activities involved with managing the home.

> On typical day I wake up, I get my first one [eldest] off to school and I get him ready for his day. And we'll go out and pay bills, go grocery shopping first thing in the morning cuz he comes home at lunch. And then afternoon snack time and then my day starts again when he gets home. And then I do supper, homework, bath, bed. That's our every day.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

> Well, I wake up. We usually go drive. We do whatever we have planned that day. Like if we have appointments then we go. We either go to my family or his family to visit. Go out and just do that all day. In and out all day. And then in the evening about eight or nine we go for a walk. Take him for a walk and then come home and go to bed.
>
> *Courtney, common law, 7 month old son (E-MC) (SK)*

Care work in a typical day can even extend beyond immediate family care responsibilities to providing care for other persons in the community. Mary, a widowed mother in BC, worked as a Registered Nurse before she was hurt in a debilitating car accident. She provides all kinds of assistance to some elderly, single persons living in her apartment building (e.g. cutting hair, bathing, preparing meals, picking up milk, etc.). Debra, who was also an RN before becoming extremely ill, recently juggled caring for her child and for another woman in the community. Her case is especially unique because she helped organize a support network of friends to help her and did all this while attending a mandatory employment preparation program (Bridging the Gap). Her experiences fall into both themes of 'we *are* active employables' and 'it's not *work* but it's full-time.'

> Right now I'm ah, for the last two weeks I've been caring for a woman who is a high risk pregnancy… And um, my little guy and I actually left our home for a week and came to her home. And then I lived, you know, I did everything that I would normally do except I did it out of her house and then drove him to school in the morning. And then went to school and then you know, and then I had to get people to take shifts because I wasn't there from here to here. And then you know I would go back… I brought her home from the hospital. I said 'okay, give me a list.' Right? Because I didn't have anybody's phone numbers. And I just started going 'okay, when are you available? This is your shift, this is when you're working. If you're not there, you know I'm going to be really upset…' we clean, we um, do her laundry, we assist with showers…
>
> *Debra, lone mother (guardian), 5 year old son (RRT) (BC)*

For Lillian, a typical day is spent helping other low-income friends and family because she has a vehicle and can provide transportation providing she has gas money.

> Normally I get up and then I start doing things for family members, trying to help them all cuz they're low income too. And uh I try and do my part because we're not as worse off than they are cuz I have a vehicle and they don't have a license and I take them to the Food Bank if they need help or appointments and interviews with different jobs and stuff like that. Or in the community there's people that ask me to help them out so that's what I do, just drive them around. If I have the gas and that. Otherwise, other than that I ask them for some money for gas and if they can, they can and if they won't I still try to do my best to help them out. But then sometimes it doesn't feel very good because I don't have any money for gas to take them around. And that's what I do in the daytime like when I get up in the morning. Most of the time that's what I do.
>
> *Lillian, common law, 2 children (E-MC) (SK)*

These two themes directly confront the stigmatizing rhetoric surrounding parents on assistance and confirm what other researchers have observed about the social reproduction of parents on assistance. Parents are involved in multiple 'doings' in their daily lives. The complexity of living everyday life on assistance is not so very different than juggling participation in paid work and maintaining family life. For some parents, their past labour market participation and current market relations give the appearance of matching the emphasis on employability in social assistance policy. For example, just under half of all parents interviewed indicated that they were thinking about pursuing employment or were already actively doing so.[55]

The theme 'we are active employables' suggests that parents' mandatory participation in welfare-to-work programming can potentially mean a successful entrance into the paid labour force. This theme also meshes nicely with the enforcement dimension of creating parents' employability. Because all three provinces utilize employment planning or mandatory job searches, however, parents' reports of their seeking work must also be understood as a manifestation of the enforcement dimension. In contrast, the theme 'it's not *work* but it's full-time' introduces the other main activity of parents on assistance who have not yet been informed that they must engaged in mandatory welfare-to-work programming. For those not designated as employable, the time involved in family care relations appears to match what is currently expected of them in social assistance policy but could potentially lead to conflict once and if they are expected to seek work.

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[55] Of all 46 parents interviewed, only three lone mothers (one from BC and two from Saskatchewan) had never worked in any kind of paid employment. As seen in Appendix B, Joanne, Theresa, and Courtney all have less than Grade 12 education and had their first child between the ages of 15 and 19. As evident in Appendix A, 22 parents had completed Grade 12 or higher in education. These parents had worked in professional positions (e.g. nursing), clerical positions (e.g. secretaries, cashiers), and blue-collar positions (e.g. factory workers, construction, roofing).

At this point, the activities of parents appear to somewhat match parents' social citizenship rights to assistance on the basis of their employability efforts. To clarify to what extent their entitlement relationship match their everyday activities, I turn to parents' thoughts about each ministry's emphasis on work and how they perceive whether they even have social citizenship rights to assistance. If parents are feeling conflicted about the balancing of their market relations with their family care relations, we would expect them to have mixed feelings about the emphasis on work in social assistance policy and/or perceive the conceptualization of their social citizenship rights to be problematic.

The Hint of Conflict

The Emphasis on Employability

Every parent was asked what they thought about the ministry's interest in getting parents on assistance back into work. The results of the in-depth interviews with parents reveal that they overwhelmingly perceive the emphasis on employability with a mixture of positive and negative feelings. These kinds of responses were categorized according to the major theme **half and half.** This theme signifies how parents often would begin with agreement that the emphasis on their workforce participation is positive but then qualify it in some way, pointing to their own personal situations, including family care responsibilities, or the situations of others.

> Ah, it's kind of half and half… for some people yes, for other people no, because there's a lot of people that have mental problems and are on disability. You know, and unless you're on your deathbed, they can expect you to get up and go to work.
> *Joanne, lone mother, 6 year old son (E-MC) (BC)*

> Yeah, depending, I guess you'd have to look at each person individual though. It's not a whole all or nothing kind of thing.
> *Tracy Lynn, common law, 3 children (E-MC) (AB)*

> It is a good thing yeah. Cuz then otherwise they're just gonna stay home and be lazy and rely on everybody else to take care of them, which it is a good thing but I don't know it depends. Like I would like to stay home with her, but I don't even know how much time I, if I have a year or not. Like I've never really asked and they've [caseworkers] never really told me. She just wants me to go to school.
> *Lillian, lone mother, 2 children (RRT) (SK)*

For Steven and Brandon, the emphasis on moving parents off of assistance and into work was seen to be positive but the low benefit levels was also thought to counter-act this positive aspect.

> I like the idea that they're setting up social programs to help people get back to work. Again, I say that and then I qualify with it would be nice if they gave them a little extra financial resources to build their confidence up so they could go back into the work force.
> *Stephen, lone father, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*

> Interviewer: Do you think it's good that they're [the ministry] trying so hard to get people off of welfare into work?
> Brandon: Sure I do, but I don't think that's an excuse to not raise the welfare rates for the last ten years either. Cuz I don't think anybody want to be on welfare, doesn't matter how much they're giving them. So making people suffer at, I don't know. I've gotten, I'm penniless, man, that's all I can say to them.
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

Regardless of their province of residence, only a small group of parents (< 5) thought the emphasis on work was either only bad or only good. Elizabeth very recently exited social assistance to engage in work as a Licensed Practioner of Nursing. She thought the emphasis on work was a good for the community and society in general:

> I think that that's good. I think that people should be. If they can work, they should work, they really should. It's um, good for the um the community, it's good for themselves, it's good for family values for the children that are being born into this world.
>
> *Elizabeth, common law, 11 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

For Jessica, her positive assessment of the emphasis on work was due to the resources she could access in her search for employment.

> Actually, I think it's awesome. I think it's great that I can go to a place like CanSask, especially because I am on assistance and I am applying for out of province or out of city jobs too. If I have to re-locate, I have to re-locate. If it means twenty bucks an hour, you know, I'll do it. And ah, at CanSask, I've got the opportunity. They will mail my resume out for me, I don't have to worry 'can I afford to buy a stupid stamp,' you know? They will do that. They've got fax equipment, they've got everything else there that I can look at. So I think that's awesome.
>
> *Jessica, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (SK)*

For Linda and Karen, the emphasis on workforce participation in BC is definitely good because it can prevent individuals from taking advantage of social assistance.

> Well I think it's a good idea. Yeah. Instead of sitting there you know doing drugs or smoking it or drinking it, being a bum. I mean get out there, get work. You know learn something, do something. Yes, I agree with that. I mean anybody can do anything if they honestly try. If you have a disability of some sort, then there's got to be *something* that you can do…
>
> *Linda, lone mother, 18 year old daughter (RRT) (BC)*

> Um, what I know is that it should be understandable that you shouldn't be able to sit here on your laurels and do nothing. You shouldn't be able to sit on welfare forever. That's the one of the things that welfare put, when they put it in, in place, that's one of the things I was cheering. I'm like it's about damn time! People sit on their laurels forever and ever and ever. They just sit on welfare and they never go out and look for a job because nobody's forcing the issue… That's not fair to make society pay for you…
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

The theme 'half and half' also contained a sub-theme *one size fits all.* Parents who had more mixed feelings about the employability emphasis also implied that the *one size fits all* approach (all parents are treated the same once classified as 'expected to work' or 'not expected to work') doesn't always apply to everyone. Hence, even preventing individuals from taking advantage of the system only makes sense if the prevention is not based on the assumption that welfare-to-work programming is a perfect fit for everyone.

> Um, people abuse the system all of the time. Regularly. Probably half of the people on welfare right now are abusing the system. They're working and collecting welfare at the same time. And it's not unreasonable for the government to want to address that. However, you can't just blast at the whole crowd and hope that you get the right people.
>
> *Stephen, lone father, 1 son (E-D) (BC)*

> I think that's a good idea cuz there is a lot of people I believe that are out just abusing the system and just requesting a cheque so they don't have to do anything. And, so, it you know, kind of goes both ways right. Like, it's very, it's difficult ... If you maybe like have such a situation, like you know, especially with mental illness, um, if you're unable to work but yet you're not diagnosed, and you're just kind of floating and then, you know that happens? I can see a lot, it kind of goes hand in hand. And, people aren't finding out what's wrong with them, and they're not maintaining employment and they're being kicked off the system. And, so you know, that's kind of, I don't like that idea.
>
> *Debra, lone mother (guardian), 5 year old son (RRT) (BC)*

Similarly, when asked about the emphasis on her employability, Ariel initially replied: "I think it's ridiculous." She then expanded upon her opinion by finding fault with the *one size fits all* approach of social assistance and maintaining that it creates more problems for the ministry.

> [B]ecause some people are unemployable... like herding everybody into one category and then let's just herd everybody into this one, and then you know, there's gonna be some that are gonna fall and they're gonna get just trampled all over, and, but that's okay, it doesn't matter, just keep herding them in. And, and, we'll clean up the mess later is what it seems like the Ministry's doing. You know

> like, let's just do this, and regardless to what the outcry is or what the um, outcome is gonna be.
>
> *Ariel, lone mother, 2 children (E-AC) (BC)*

A Right or Not a Right?

Paralleling the mixed feelings of parents about the emphasis on employability are their mixed feelings of whether or not they perceive they do have 'rights' to social assistance. Each parent interviewed was asked whether or not they think they have a right to assistance and whether or not they think the ministry views them as having a right to assistance (see Appendix A, interview guide). Across all interviews, approximately 66% of the parents interviewed (30/46) responded positively – they do have rights. Their justifications in this regard were also carefully crafted. The theme **rights are not necessarily for me** captures the complexity of parents' beliefs and opinions.

For some parents, their opinions about entitlement were not self-centred but rather family focused. The idea that social assistance is a right does not mean it's just a right for the parent in a time of need but rather a right for them to provide the care necessary for their children during this time of need. This observation resonates with Seguino and Butler's (1998) finding in their study of the decision-making surrounding engagement in paid work among lone parents on welfare in the U.S. Seguino and Butler found that the primary goal of parents living on welfare, above and beyond concerns with their market participation, is to provide for their children.

> Say I'm working, I have a full time job and all of a sudden something goes wrong or something and I get fired. Okay, well if I can't get another job, how am I going to take care of my baby? Okay, and if you can't take care of your baby, most likely they'll come and take it away.
>
> *Amy, lone mother, 5 month old son (E-AC) (BC)*

> A right, um. I don't think it is a right necessarily. What I think is for the government, it is the government's responsibility to make sure children, I'm not talking about their parents, that children get taken care of. If they were solely giving money to the right children, for this child's purposes, not the adult, but solely for the children. That's the part of these parents to have a right to social assistance that I would believe in. Children have a right to live...
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> The kids of today are the ones for tomorrow and if we didn't support them in some way... You know I'm not saying hey keep me on assistance for the rest of my life. But if there wasn't some outlet for us, we'd lose them. They would lose themselves, their identity. And just because a parent is on assistance doesn't mean hey we're, we're assistance bums as some of them are classified...And if they had nothing and were taken away from their family placed with somebody else... So, they're losing out on that family contact.
>
> *Justine, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

> Well, yeah I guess I'm entitled to it because, well, like for the past four years I had to stay home and take care of little ones. Well now that they're going to school then it gives me a chance to go back and go to school and do whatever I have to do to have a job and get my life back.
>
> *Janice, lone mother, 2 children (E-FR) (SK)*

Within the discussion of the social citizenship investment regime in Chapter 2, the point was made that there has not yet been an absolute paradigm shift away from the social citizenship rights regime. Opinion poll evidence from Mendelsohn (2002) was cited to show that many Canadians still believe in the importance of core social programs. In-depth interviews also suggest that for parents on assistance, beliefs in collective solidarity and protection from unexpected risk are still valuable and expected to be recognized. For some parents, rights to income support in times of need are what Canada is all about. This is especially the case when parents have participated in the labour market in the past, including paying taxes and into pensions.

> Yes, especially as being such a taxpayer. I started working at thirteen, like I was telling you...I spent many, many years working my butt off and giving that money away, and you know what's the point in giving it to the government if, if there's public out there that needs help and showing they have children and

> they're in a situation that they need help. And none of my money goes towards them, then where is it going? You know, there's only so much that should be eaten up by the government uh, well politics.
>
> *Scott, lone father, 2 year old daughter (E-AC) (BC)*

> In this country, yes…Um, because this country has been strong to announce they want welfare of children, to better the welfare of children, to lower the poverty … It's kind of, it's a 50/50 my position. Because there's so many people who take advantage of it but at the same time, there's so many of us that deserve it. And that's *our* right.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

> I think so… just part of being Canadian I guess. We take care of each other…whoever they keep talking about our aging population and, and uh people getting their pensions and stuff. It's like I say if they're handing out big time pensions to people like four hundred grand a year to these politicians to retire them every year, then I don't see why they cannot help somebody that's having a hard time. It's you know like it's I, I just that's my perspective anyway. I don't know.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

Compared to the 30 parents who responded positively, 12 parents maintained that assistance is not a right. The following quotes below illustrate that although province of residence does not matter, parents' perceptions of others who take advantage of the system shape their opinion that assistance is not a right. The quotes also hint at how there are differing opinions about whether some are more deserving of assistance than others, such as women who flee abusive relationships compared to women who have children as lone mothers.

> No, no I don't think they have a right to it. I don't think it is a right… And I can qualify that by, um, I have a nineteen year old niece. You know she was under her mom's umbrella at eighteen. She was reaching the age of nineteen and this was what she said 'I can always collect welfare.' Like it was like entitled to her… And she had been raised on welfare. And I blew up at her and I said that's a horrible way of thinking. You're nineteen years old and your great ambition is to get on welfare. I said don't you see how disabling it really is? And she just went 'well, I'm entitled it to and it's…' And even now that she's on it temporarily and she has to declare earnings, she feels like they are stealing money from her. It's so

> sad. I told her I was twenty nine years old before I even touched welfare and I was ashamed of myself that I had to do that at that moment in my life. I was, I was humiliated. Because it was not what I wanted to do. I would rather have worked but I wasn't able to at that moment. And, uh, you're nineteen and you're already thinking that it's okay.
>
> *Stephen, lone father, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*

> Well, well it's your choice to have a child. It wasn't the government that forced you to have a baby, so it is your obligation in society to take care of. But things happen, like in my situation I ended up with an abuser and he just would not help take care and support the family. And there was constant domestic violence going on in this house and it was just, it was very hard. She was from the ages of zero to two, close to two, time to finally get out, get out. And then try to restart my brain thinking what's, what's gonna happen in the future. So it wasn't a right that I could demand being on social assistance, but there was just no other way out. Other than her starving to death, and me too you know.
>
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

> No, I am very humble. I know I am capable of going out there and finding a job and I am capable of going out there and going to school. And I can't say that I use my kids as an excuse, although I'll have to say honestly I did yes. And it was just easier because they were just small and they were very needy and then like special needs and oh my Lord just dealing with this and that. And if I was working I don't think I would've pulled it together at all.
>
> *Tamara, lone mother, 5 children (RRT) (SK)*

To summarize, parents' mixed feelings about the emphasis on employability and their perceptions of their social citizenship rights tie directly to the dimensions within social assistance policy that shape them as responsible risk takers. Parents' positive assessment of the emphasis on work, qualified by their concern over how it can be contradicted by their own situations or the situation of others, intermesh with the enforcement and de-/re-gendering dimensions of social assistance policy. Lone fathers who qualified their positive assessment with concerns over benefit levels point to the restriction of benefit amounts dimension. Parents' who are certain they are entitled to assistance are less satisfied with the punitive and restrictive dimensions of social assistance policy.

Although all three provinces have, generally speaking, made an effort to change the 'culture of entitlement,' mixed feelings about the emphasis on employability and a sense of 'rights' to assistance suggest a mismatch between what is said in policy and what is believed by parents living on assistance. Since parents see these gaps between what they should strive for in life according to social assistance policy (via the five dimensions) and what is actually occurring in their daily lives, the two themes of 'half and half' and 'rights are not just for me' point to parents' experiences of work/family conflict. It is in the next section that more emphasis is placed on showing how the conceptualization of parents' social citizenship rights to assistance across the three provinces does not necessarily match their everyday realities.

The Work-Family Conflict of Parents on Assistance

The fact that parents on assistance intricately balance multiple activities during a typical day on assistance demonstrates that they experience a **time crunch.** Like parents in paid work, parents on assistance balance their market care relations, manifest as either their participation in programming or their paid labour,[56] with their family care relations. The following quotes from Joanne and Breanna, who were completing their Grade 12, illustrate this.

> Well, now, um. I get up in the morning, get myself ready, drop my son off at school and then I'm in school all day. And then when school is out, I go and pick

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[56] Of all 46 parents interviewed, 23 reported that they were either currently attending programs or had participated in programming in the past.

> him up. And then we go home, and cook dinner, and watch a bit of t.v. and go to bed. And that's my day.
>
> *Joanne, lone mother, 6 year old son (E-MC) (BC)*

> Yeah, so I go and I drop him off at daycare, and then I go to school, and then if I have to do running around I'll go and do that and then usually between two-thirty and three o'clock I go and pick him up again at daycare. Come home, do a little cleaning, uh cook supper and get him ready for bed. Get myself ready for bed, and then same old thing all over again.
>
> *Breanna, lone mother, 2 year old son (RRT) (AB)*

In both Alberta and Saskatchewan, parents are allowed to earn some income per month before their benefits are reduced dollar for dollar for any earnings over the established exemption amount. Miranda's experience of attending a program, working for pay, and managing care, show how the demands of the market and care for a mother on assistance can be similar to the experiences of other parents who engage in work for pay outside the home.

> Uh, I get up, get the kids ready for school. They go to breakfast club at their school and then I go to school. So, I'm there until usually 'til about three, and I usually get an hour or so off to work with a health worker or a nap or whatever. I go pick up the kids and make supper and homework and bed. And bed for everybody so that's pretty that's pretty normal…I'm always balancing. It's like there's a little extra here, and I'm losing a little here… I'm always really, really conscientious of where everything's going. And I have to watch I don't get behind. I am allowed $200 a month for income, so if I get a little from my sewing, yeah, I'll do a little bit of mending here and there or whatever. So, I just have to be really careful… It's time or money. I'm always balancing one or the other.
>
> *Miranda, lone mother, 2 children (RRT) (AB)*

For parents who are not yet in programming or working for pay, the balancing of time demands is still an everyday reality.

> It's a lot of work. It's, it's as hard as you know just keeping a job if you had one because you always have to watch. You know you have to care for both sides. It's like a scale. You have to keep them both even. There's no way you can have great

> care and no job or no job and great care. It's hard. It just becomes like you know a natural thing… it just becomes part of your life that you have to work it out…
>
> *Christine, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT) (AB)*

The theme 'it's not *work* but it's full-time' illustrated how busy parents' days were even if they were exempt from participation in specific programs or were only searching for employment on their own. Not surprisingly, similar to the literature for parents in paid work, the theme of **overload** did characterize some parents' experiences of trying to meet conflicting demands while living on assistance. For Kendra, the work involved with three boys (ages two, three and eight years) as a lone parent means:

> It's always multi-tasking, always busy. Washing, cleaning, feeding the children, and uh, doing other things like grocery shopping. So it is pretty well, I'm always busy and overloaded. Always.
>
> *Kendra, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

Kelly, a lone mother with five children under age eight in Alberta states it quite simply: "…it's either them [caring for children] or cleaning you know."

While parents on assistance share the experiences of a time crunch and the associated feelings of overload with parents in paid work, it is with respect to the other negative outcomes of balancing demands that they have different experiences. Across the three western provinces, parents' everyday realities living on assistance 'spillover' and negatively affect their employability efforts. Comparable to the findings of other researchers, I find that parents on assistance experience **interference** in the form of health-related and income-related barriers, insufficient human capital (e.g. education, skills, and work experience), and child care responsibilities. Below, I reveal the complexity of these barriers and even introduce an additional barrier of race-based discrimination.

Barriers to Being 'Employable'

Parents' experienced specific barriers that can be categorized thematically. In all three provinces, parents' achievements of employment are contradicted by **health-related barriers**. Of all 46 parents, two were exempt from seeking employment due to an anxiety condition, four were exempt due to depression, and three were exempt due to addiction problems. Other parents were exempt from seeking work because of more severe medical conditions (see Appendix B for more details).

By far, **income-related barriers** were the most significant barriers cited across the interviews and are captured under the sub-theme, *not enough to live on*. This sub-theme refers to parents' explanations that the amount they receive in social assistance benefits is not enough to afford the daily costs associated with living.[57] Recall that this phenomenon was foreshadowed in Chapter 3 with respect to the 'restriction in benefit amounts' dimension. If parents cannot make ends meet with what they receive in benefits, however, this then creates and exacerbates other barriers to their meeting current or future employability requirements.

Parents introduced the fact that there is not enough to live on in response to questions designed to explore various components of living on assistance (e.g. a typical day, what is good about assistance, what makes it hard to leave assistance; see Appendix A, interview guide). When there is not enough to live, providing nutritious food or the basic necessities of life becomes an everyday concern.

> Well, one you're not making enough income or money. Welfare doesn't pay you enough to pay for everything your child is even going to need let alone want. I

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[57] Over 75% of all parents in some way made reference to this theme in their discussions of their experiences living on assistance (36/46).

> don't put wanting desires in the category of what these kids require. It's things that they need. Milk. They need meat. They need fruits and vegetables. When you're on Income Assistance, you don't get that. Food Bank is great…They give you great things. They give you food but they don't give you fruits and vegetables They don't give you meat. Your child thrives on that stuff and you can't give that to them. That's why I'm saying I regret. Like my child needs that stuff. She needs to grow and she needs to have the nutrients that she needs but she's not getting it.
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

> Typical day: get up in the morning and worry where the next meal is coming from. Making sure that my family is gonna be fed. I clean my house. And I look to see what has to be done in order to keep this house going. And that's my typical day. I wake up at five-thirty in the morning worried because I'm not sure we're, if I'm gonna have enough food to feed everybody. And if I don't have enough money where am I gonna get the money from? So my day starts off like that, and usually ends off when I'm tired after cleaning, doing laundry, looking after everybody. And worrying about keeping everybody fed and the house clean and the laundry done. Worrying where I'm gonna get the suds to do the laundry. Everything is a constant worry for me. And that's my day.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (RRT) (SK)*

> We could use more money for food you know…Because I mean there's like a certain way that we've been eating and I'm just getting like really tired of it and I've just been starting to just buy as much vegetable as, as I need. And you know um I'm tired of eating the food that is a filler but it's no nutritional value you know… I really care about their health you know… if I buy the fruits and vegetable that's less money for this or that …
>
> *Kelly, lone mother, 5 children (E-FR) (AB)*

As shown in Chapter 3, restrictions in benefit amounts according to surveillance or child benefit payments often translate into parents 'stealing from Peter to pay Paul.' The above quotes also illustrate that restriction in benefit amounts can mean parents have to pull money budgeted for one area of daily needs, such as for food, to afford costs of another. According to Stephen, there is a certain chain of events in this process.

> When you're on social assistance, you get one cheque, once in a month. You buy your groceries, you have to buy a whole, a large amount of groceries all at once. And for the first couple of weeks, you know you're eating quite well, or for a week or two. And then all of a sudden you're not. You're getting low on things.

> And, it's very, it's difficult to go out and apply yourself on a daily basis, knowing that you don't have proper food to keep yourself going.
>
> *Stephen, lone father, 3 year old son (E-D) (BC)*

Like other researchers (see Baker and Tippin 2002; McMullin et al. 2002), I find that two other common income-related barriers are transportation and housing costs These barriers interfere with parents' attempts to participate in the labour force or even attend work and education programs in order to meet the employability requirements of social assistance policy. In fact, comparable to Stephen's observation, Jon also links lack of *transportation* to a lack of proper food, thereby inhibiting a parents' ability to meet the employability requirements as set out in social assistance policy.

> You've given the person no means of transportation. Well that kind of puts me in a really bad spot. You're not giving them any funding, which means that they've gotta starve to death while they're doing all of this, which means they're stuck walking. Well now walking means they're gonna need extra energy. Extra energy comes from extra food, and there's none in the house. So…
>
> *Jon, common law, children in outside care (E-D) (AB)*

Both Amy and Andrea had dropped out of high school when they became pregnant. Once initially on assistance, they began to complete their schooling but then had to drop out due to inadequate transportation.

> And welfare was making me take this course but they didn't understand that I had to *walk* to it every morning. So you know, just for me to get there and then like I'd show up late and then by the time I'd get there it's time to turn around and go home. You know. I wasn't too enthusiastic with it.
>
> *Amy, lone mother, 5 month old son (E-AC) (BC)*

> I, I applied at Fresh Start downtown in February, but I dropped out cuz I couldn't get no bus fare to get there and back.
>
> *Andrea, common law, 7 month old son (RRT) (AB)*

Moreover, in Andrea's case, where her common-law partner has been under greater pressure than her to find work, "we missed two [interview appointments] already because we had no bus fare for him to go."

Although Nadine had successfully fulfilled the requirements of her 'client investment plan' in accordance with Alberta social assistance policy, she was only entitled to bus fare for the first month of her new job. This was problematic since she was not paid until the end of her first month of work.

> When I first started work they gave me a bus pass and then the next month I hadn't got my cheque yet so I asked them you know can I get a bus pass to go to work. And they told me no because I was working so I could only get the first one. And I was like I haven't got a cheque. I had to find my own way… yeah, I borrowed money off of my father in law. They make it almost hard to do it [work].
>
> *Nadine, common law relationship, 2 children (RRT-E) (AB)*

Unique to Regina, Saskatchewan, low income parents can purchase a one month bus pass for $15. However, the lower cost of the pass did not always mean all parents were even aware of it or that it was easy to purchase on an already limited budget.

> So and transportation, like as far as the bus and everything. It's too much money to pay for three of us at the same time… So if I'm going to just go and get those bus tickets, I'm dishing out $45 right there. And then we might not even use the bus that many times. So it wouldn't even be worth it. In a way, it's good…I could use it right now but then, it's bad because you pay $15 for the kids, for their bus passes, and then you might not even use it that much.
>
> *Michelle, common law, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

Across all provinces, *housing* costs are another income-related barrier for parents. Actual rental costs (with the exemption of low-income housing units) are far above the amount parents are entitled to in shelter allowances. It is therefore not surprising that of all 46 parents interviewed, two mothers (in BC and Saskatchewan) reported that they had experienced temporary homelessness. They had lived with others simply to have a safe place to stay until they found accommodation they could afford while living on assistance. Parents who are not fortunate enough to have low-income housing pad their shelter allowances ('stealing from Peter to pay Paul') with their basic allowance benefits in order to meet the rent.

> See a two bedroom house is like $500. And then two bedroom with two people, like say me and granddaughter, we rented a home by ourselves, we're only allowed $385 [in shelter allowance]. That's only how much for rent in the province of Saskatchewan…out of the difference of your own basic allowance that you get for your family…you have to throw that in there...Yeah, and then you're not living. For that you're getting more sick and trying to live a good life but how can you live a good life when you don't get enough money and then even to, uh, go ahead and go find a good job?
>
> *Lillian, common law, 2 children (E-MC) (SK)*

Some parents fortunate enough to access low-income housing were quite vocal in stating that the trade-offs include their family's exposure to the undesirable behaviour of other residents.

> Yeah, it's hard to find affordable housing out there um, on the system. Because it's usually way above what you can afford…And uh, the Ministry ah, if you go over a certain amount, they'll tell you you can't live in that because it's too much… But if you have kids and you find something that is more affordable, what you end up doing is moving your kids into a drug infested area or something that is ah, immoral for your kids to live around so, stuck between a rock and a hard place there.
>
> *Robert, lone father, 13 year old daughter (E-D) (BC)*

> The complex that I live in is, I'd say eighty percent um, abuse the system for assistance, you know, um, I don't wanna associate with them. And, uh, some like I try, there's only three other units that I associate with and it's very, very rarely that I'll go to them and actually spend time with them, so the rest of the time that I am there, I stick to myself… because of the drugs, and because of the abuse to the system. I don't wanna be involved in it, I don't wanna like I feel like I'm pulled down enough as it is, I don't wanna be pulled any lower.
>
> *Pat, lone mother, 18 year old daughter (RRT) (BC)*

Since education and experience, two key sources of human capital, are positively associated with earnings (Noonan 2001), it is also not surprising that parents' poor levels of education, skills and training, and work experience inhibit their employability potential. Indeed, perhaps most revealing of how the emphasis on employability in social assistance policy does not always match parents' actual capabilities are these **human capital barriers**. I find that these include lack of *education*, *skills/training*, and *work experience* and parents' poor flexibility in terms of *available work hours*. The following quotes illustrate the first three of these human capital barriers. What is crucial to note is employable parents on assistance are well aware that these barriers inhibit their ability to find employment.

> They make you resumes, they really do. They make you wonderful, beautiful resumes. I got three different types of resumes that they have made me...I don't have the *skills*. They don't give you the skills to put on your resume. People want skilled people who have diplomas and degrees. You can't send somebody out who hasn't worked in ten years. Which I mean, I haven't. I haven't worked in ten years and you're expecting me, well, to go out and get a job now. Doing what? I don't have any skills. I've raised children for the last ten years.
>
> *Karen, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

> Having, having a grade twelve, that's not enough sometimes. You've gotta be trained in some cases and there's yeah there's a lot of people that would be more skilled that you because simply because oh maybe they worked somewhere before or maybe they have fork lifter operator or um just like this uh getting trained for this secretarial job. There's, there's so many skill you have to have out there.
>
> *Georgia, lone mother, 4 children (RRT) (SK)*

For parents not expected to work because of health issues, their human capital barriers centre on their lack of work experience.

> What are my goals? Ah, I'd like to have job training since I've never worked, that's a big fear. Like I've never worked. If you stick me behind a counter at McDonalds even, its just like, um, I'll have a panic attack. I don't know anything about work so I need experience.
>
> *Joanne, lone mother, 6 year old son (E-MC) (BC)*

> I know how to write resumes. I know how to do cover letters. I know how to do all that, and I won't do those programs. I need to know how to do interview process. I need to know how to actually go into and feel comfortable in the workplace. Like everyone feels differently in the workplace.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

For mothers in Alberta, where the economy is stronger than the other two provinces and there is a greater availability of jobs (Boothe and Reid 2001), it is the combination of hours available to work and child care responsibilities that are a source of interference. Albertan mothers' experiences are similar to the findings of other research (see, for example Coverman 1983; Noonan 2001) that has shown that mothers' primary responsibility for domestic work can affect their wages by restricting the amount they can participate in paid work or the location of where they can work.

> [H]ours of work – some jobs I can't do. Like, I have to take care of my daughter. I can't take a retail job that is in the mall because the mall closes at nine or ten. I have a daughter to watch. Who's gonna watch my daughter? I'm a single mom. I can't find babysitting....and you know I could have her in daycare for half the day, but to go to a workplace and say, okay, I can only work from this hour to this hour and that's all I can do. They're gonna go: 'yeah, see ya later.'
>
> *Christine, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT) (AB)*

> She's gotta be able to start taking care of herself a little bit more before I can go out and do anything. Because a lot of jobs, well, they want you at their disposal all the time. They don't want you all limited, oh I can only work this. ...I know when you start at new places, you're bound by, oh, a couple weekends here and there and a few nights.
>
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

Not surprisingly, **child care responsibilities** were most often pointed to as an area of contention in parents' lives. Similar to parents in paid work, the stress or conflict experienced by parents on assistance often manifests itself as a result of their attempts at trying to match their everyday caregiving responsibilities with the expectation that they will work outside of the home. Related to the 'half and half' theme, two BC lone mothers perceive the expectations of employability are fair as long as affordable day care resources are available once their children reach the age of three years old.

> I think they're doing, it's a fair thing to send people to work, but at the same time people with children have more difficulties, such as, our children are in school and then they are little. Like I said, these two boys need full time care, and he will need after school care. I mean, if I can get that support, I would be gladly to work.
>
> *Kendra, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> Well, the good part is now that they're implementing these new training programs or bringing them back, which is a very good thing because that will allow people to actually get some training and get into a trade where they'll make decent money. But, it's a great thing. But, the way they necessarily go about it is not the best, as I expressed, you know if they would wait one more year so our kids could be in school full time. That takes a big stress off, um, financial stress because it's just before and after school care that the kids require then...
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

This lack of available, affordable, and quality day care spaces was a problem consistently noted by parents.

> Everybody's full, there's no room. Like I don't know what they think they're gonna do when all these kids start turning three and all these moms have to go to work. There's not enough space. There's not. It's just gonna be like the boomers are gonna be retiring and there's not gonna be any care homes for them. And the three year olds are gonna be turning three...
>
> *Ariel, lone mother, 2 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> There's a long, long waiting list to get him into any day care. I have to put him in a friend's house, which I don't have a problem putting him a friend's house. But quite frankly, it's better for him to be in an organized day care rather than just at somebody's house watching t.v. all day.
>
> *Jessica, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (SK)*

Brandon's explanation of why it's hard to participate in a program due to his lone parent status and child care responsibilities hits on the fact that even with day care subsidies, these can be limited and if not matched with transportation costs, are not much help for parents in the paid workforce in the long run.

> Probably because my kid only goes to school in the morning that's, that's a big one. And even, even when they [the ministry] pay for your three months [day care], most programs that you're gonna get into are longer than the three months or anything that I see that has an end to the means is longer than a three month program. So that means that from, from the time that she's out of school you have to take off your program to get her from the school to get her to the daycare. And that's coming out of your pocket cuz they won't pay for that part of the, for the transportation I guess part of it. So that's one hang up for the transportation from the school to the daycare.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

Other parents concur that even if one finds employment, other barriers like hours of work or transportation costs actually exacerbate the costs of outsider provided child care. Candace's use of the phrase 'a buck a minute' refers to the how many day cares charge parents for each additional minute their children are not picked up past closing time.

> If we are to um get all of our children into daycare, full time, we are having to take approximately two to $300 out of our pockets above what subsidy pays. On an income assistance budget, you can't afford that, and if I was to go back to work full time, minimum wage, I would be barely making what I receive on income assistance realistically. Um, there's a couple hundred dollars more per month, but that's what's eaten up in the daycare cost. So there's no actual financial gain by going to work and getting a minimum wage job for a single parent of three kids because anything that is a gain goes out in daycare costs or transportation costs or clothing, or all the things you need for working.
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> But you do if the job requires that they're out there twelve hours a day. You have to do the twelve hours a day. And see the daycares they got, this government got so flexible with these guys again. Well they're closing earlier and earlier. Like the daycare at her school is five forty-five and a buck a minute.
>
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

In Chapter 3, it was observed that one way de-/re-gendering of social citizenship rights to assistance occurs is when parents are 'disentitled to care.' This theme captured how parents object to the mandatory placement of their children in day care because they miss out on rearing their children as they see fit. And yet, here it is evident that across all three provinces, the emphasis on employability occurs at the same time there is a lack of affordable, quality child care. This, in turn, interferes with parents' ability to find 'good' jobs. For example, Reanne even moved from BC to Alberta to try to improve her chances of finding employment. However, since her first problematic experience of employment as a lone mother, her subsequent searches have been unsuccessful:

> I can't find any jobs that I want in days…Last year I worked nights and I worked weekends and it is too hard on the children. Way too hard because I have the one in school and one home full-time.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

Elizabeth, who recently began work, worries that the lack of good jobs in BC may mean parents have to work several 'bad' jobs, creating a negative spill-over effect on their family life.

> [Oh], number one is that you can't get full time [jobs]…Everywhere is part time, so there's no benefits. So, you have to work say two jobs part time, and you're still not getting benefits. So, then what happens, then you're out there working all the time just to make enough money and then what happens to family? Family's gone.
>
> *Elizabeth, common-law relationship, 1 child (RRT-E) (BC)*

Systemic racism is a theme that is specific to employability experiences of non-White parents. Within the total sample, 12 parents self-reported their aboriginal ancestry (6 two parent families, 6 lone parent families), and 1 lone mother reported she was Fijian. The sub-theme *race matters* refers to parents' reports that somehow their race/ethnicity matters to how they are received and treated by others, whether this pertains to their experiences on social assistance or in society at large.[58]

For Rebecca, the colour of her skin did not seem to matter when she was a low-wage worker. However, once she received her B.A., she believes it has been used against her in her applications for employment.

> Rebecca: I used to do anything, like I used to do anything that would come along. I would do it. Yeah, I would do anything, like even waitressing, or dishwashing or stuff like that. Anything that would come along I would do because it was a job right. And now you try and find them and they say you're overqualified or sorry, you know, there's someone else. You know, it's just never worked out.
> Interviewer: What do you think that's all about?
> Rebecca: I think they're self-prejudiced. I know it… It was easy for them to give me work when they thought I was when I said, worked as a dishwasher or a waitress or something. But try and get something a little bit higher. *Uh uh,* you're not gonna go there. The colour of my skin matters. No matter what people say. It matters. And, it's a very, very prejudiced, Regina… I face it, I face it everyday so I guess it's all my life. But I've learned how to handle it without having to get angry. I just know it's just, um, people just don't understand. They just don't understand the culture. They don't understand us. And when they don't understand they get scared.
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

In contrast to Rebecca's experience, both Kendra and Colin (Lorraine's partner) hint at the double jeopardy they experience in seeking work. Their visible minority status, coupled with their low education and lack of skills and/or work experience inhibit them from finding employment.

Um, some employers, they look at you as ethnic and they just don't wanna be

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[58] Since more non-White parents were interviewed in Saskatchewan, the potential difficulty in naming this theme as specific to only their experiences is recognized. For example, Edmonton also shares a large aboriginal population with Regina (see Appendix A, p. 280) and parents in this city could potentially have similar experiences of 'race matters.' Although I interviewed only three parents in Edmonton who self-reported their aboriginal heritage and none of them explicitly discussed their race/ethnicity, readers are cautioned that there is a potential for transferability of this theme across these two provinces.

> bothered. They give jobs to different person… Yeah, and sometimes the skills effect, the education and skills.
>
> *Kendra, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> It's hard for a native person to get a job…that um, doesn't have education. That doesn't have the work, work experience.
>
> *Colin, common law partner of Lorraine, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

Across the Saskatchewan interviews with aboriginal parents, it was interesting to observe that some parents stated that race also mattered in a positive way because it enabled educational opportunities (e.g. tuition is paid for Status Indians) or job opportunities. Michelle explains:

> So like that's, that's kind of like the advantage of being Status because you have such a better opportunity of going to school. Like if I wanted to go to university, I could pick the university class that I like. I don't think I'm university material, so. But they pay for your, all your classes and your books and everything… And I know like nowadays when you go out to find a job, like a lot of places have to hire a certain percentage of aboriginal people…And everybody's always telling me, you should go out there and just try because even if you don't have all of the qualifications or whatever, they have to hire. Like if you're Status you have a good chance of getting the job because of my ancestors.
>
> *Michelle, common law, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

However, Rebecca's experience in equal opportunity employment designated for minority persons illustrates that the rewards are not always as great as expected.

> I was put there by the, I was put in the Department of Labour right after I took my clerk-typist course…I was thinking I'm a 'token Indian' because they weren't giving me… I know to type, I know how to file, I know how to do everything but I was put in the corner where here [reaching to grab a sheet of paper], once in a while we used to have to proof read. I'm like you proof read? Take a couple of days to do that?...Give me a break. I'm smarter than that.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian) 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

Some aboriginal parents also spoke of how they resist how popular, stereotypical opinions of aboriginals on assistance infiltrate their daily life experiences. When explaining a typical day, Georgia lists her usual domestic labour activities. In mentioning meal preparation, she states that she sometimes runs out of food. Whenever this occurs, she takes her children to Soul Harbour, a soup kitchen in Regina. What is interesting here is that she stresses that there are never addictive substances in her home, thereby resisting the stereotypical assumption that she is out of food because she spends her benefits on drugs or alcohol. However, in making this statement, she does further perpetuate dominate stereotypes about 'Indians.'

> Usually make breakfast and then if they need to play they play. Basically cleaning, sweeping and mopping the floor, laundry, whatever that needs to be done. Basically maintaining the home, feeding my kids breakfast, lunch and supper always. Always gotta be, but if I barely have enough food as it is then I take them to Soul Habour. In no way is there alcohol or drugs in the house. Not even on a weekend. Not even on cheque day. Regardless if all the other Indians are doing it let's say. I refuse to do that.
>
> *Georgia, common law, 4 children (RRT) (SK)*

One possible explanation for why parents in Regina were more likely to voice concerns over racial/ethnic issues than the aboriginal parents in Edmonton is because of the very visible racial, geographic segregation in one section of the city. Known either as 'Mocassin Flats' or 'The Hood,' it is an area of the city between two major railway tracks. This area houses the majority of low-income housing and is predominantly populated by aboriginal families. It is also an area that is characterized by high crime (e.g. drugs, prostitution). The quote below from Tamara illustrates what 'The Hood' is like. She points to how she tries to make her children aware that though their might be some remnants of truth in stereotypical assumptions, they are often inaccurate or hide the reasons behind behaviours that are targeted as problematic. Despite her teaching this to her own children, she is aware that others are not so open to recognizing the causes of social problems in Regina. Others' assumptions have made it difficult for her to place her children in different schools outside of the 'The Hood.'

> Making them aware of like we used to live in the, in the Moccasin Flats, whatever you wanna call it. I was comfortable there because nobody ever bothered us. Nobody ever bothered us. Like I had a drug dealer on this side, a hooker on this side, a booster, a woman that walks into a store stealing clothes and then she would resell them at half price, and an old lady with kiddies across the street. These people looked after me and my kids cuz I was a single mom…And I never had a break in or anything. Like these people were looking out for me and my kids. And I was comfortable living there. I didn't bother anybody, and I'd say hi, and like oh that's a hooker. And I never gave them the stereotype like oh that's… These women go out there. Some of them have no choice. Some of them get slapped around and their boyfriends make them go out there… This one girl they [her children] used to go to school with in Albert school. Her mom made her hook. I told them you guys not all mommies are good. I go this girl, remember her Lydia, she's out there, she's hooking because her mom slaps her around and told her to get out there. And they're like oh really? It's like yes you guys, not all hookers are, are bad girls. They do that to feed their kids some of them… Some of them are out there because they're stuck on taking drugs…And I really try hard to try and not do the stereotype thing cuz I know we get that a lot because we're a big family people think that my kids are gonna be unruly. They think that we're buggy, yucky people that like you know… they almost didn't let us into Arkoa School because of that reason. They thought that my kids would be bad and unruly. And it's like no…
>
> *Tamara, lone mother, 5 children (RRT) (SK)*

Joseph maintains the root cause of problems in 'The Hood' as well as throughout the larger city is due to systemic racism.

> Joseph: To tell you the truth, Regina is going downhill. It's been going downhill for the longest time. Sooner or later it's going to get out of hand and the police and all that, it's, they're not going to have any control whatsoever. That's how bad it's getting.
> Interviewer: And what do you think is the cause of that? Or if you were to say like why you think that's happening?

> Joseph: Because it's the racism in this city. Yeah, so, that's the main reason. And nobody really looks at it. Like, you know, like I've seen a few guys get jumped for no reason… that's how the city is going.
>
> *Joseph, lone father, eight year old son (RRT) (SK)*

These four barriers dovetail with the five dimensions of creating parents' employability, creating difficult contradictions. Once parents' employability is pursued through the restriction of their benefit amounts, it is not surprising that most parents report that they do not have enough to live on. Not being able to make ends meet, in turn, is negatively related to their transportation and housing costs. The enforcement and surveillance of parents' employability efforts seems to also sit at odds with human capital barriers. Although parents do participate in work and education programming, it appears that participation is not necessarily improving their skills and work experience deficits. Moreover, child care responsibilities, at least for very young children, make it difficult to attend programming and even balance searching for employment. Finally, systemic racism is an issue that challenges aboriginal parents' efforts at exiting assistance. Hence, similar to how parents in paid work experience interference from family life into work life, specific barriers negatively affect the ability of parents on assistance to engage in paid work. Also unique to the work/family conflict of parents on assistance are their experiences of policy constraints themselves as an additional source of conflict.

Living According to Policy Constraints

Parents must juggle the above barriers with the expectations (or future expectations) of their employability entrenched within social assistance policy. Policy constraints themselves are a stressor and create conflicting dilemmas in parents' lives.

These policy constraints should be understood as outcomes of, or synonymous with, the assumptions and strategies that underlie the restriction, enforcement, and surveillance dimensions. This is because parents allude to how their lives are structurally determined by these policy constraints. The theme **rush, push – pull!** refers to parents' explanations of how they are being rushed/pushed into programs or rushed/pushed off of assistance. Related to the specific dimensions of restriction and enforcement, parents feel systematically pulled down various pre-determined paths.

The majority of parents (48%; 22/46) who used the terms rushing/pushing/pulling did so by answering how they feel about the emphasis on work and what they think the ministry is doing poorly with families on assistance. More BC and Alberta parents spoke about this dynamic than parents in Saskatchewan. According to some parents, pressuring them to exit assistance only makes sense if they are trained and skilled and if it does not involve coercion.

> I think it's a good idea if they're doing it for the right reasons. If they're not just trying to push people off and force them to do more than what they can… Help them, don't push them… They want people back to work is a good thing. But like I said, the way they're going about it, I think they should really step back and take a look at how they're going about it. Not pushing people. You know, if they don't have the skills, they should be more into not showing them how to find a job but showing them how to find a job by giving them the skills to find a job.
>
> *Lisa, lone mother, 4 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> I think they push too much…they're always saying if you don't go find a job you're cut off or you don't get a job we're cutting you off. For some people it's a lot harder to find a job than others so. So it kinda puts more stress on them. It's not very good…I've known people who weren't able to find a job right away and they got kicked off cuz they got accused of not looking for a job.
>
> *Nadine, common law, 2 children (RRT-E) (AB)*

> I think, I think that's good. It depends on if they rush you. You know, like they want to rush you but you're not ready yet?
>
> *Theresa, lone mother, 6 children (RRT) (SK)*

Not surprisingly, parents' reference to any feelings of being rushed or pushed cut across many barriers already identified. Policy constraints can exacerbate the feelings of conflict created by such barriers as income-related barriers and child care responsibilities.

> Yeah, like they're pushing and pushing and pushing but it just doesn't work…It's not as easy as it seems. Like each person, each individual will have their own circumstances, their own difficulties, their own ways they have to weave through things. And they [caseworkers] don't take the moment to understand. Like, I know they can't take five minutes with each person, because we're all waiting in line but you know you can't be pushing people into jobs when they're like 'take anything you can get.'
>
> *Christine, lone mother, 4 year old daughter (RRT) (AB)*

> The single people that have been on income assistance, the way that they have been for years, I can understand the government really wanting to try and push to get them off of the system. But, for a lot of single parents, it doesn't make a lot of sense to me. They're wanting to push, but they're not willing to give. If they want us to actually go back to work and succeed, to not have to come back to them, they have to help give. Before they used to give us things like bus passes, and clothing allowances, and day you know daycare top-ups and stuff like that and they would allow us to have our medical and dental for a year after we were off of the system. They do not allow of those things anymore. So, they say 'go look for work, but we're not giving you anything extra.' How are you supposed to accomplish that?
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

In Debra's case, the fact that she had been employed in a good job was often used against her to push her to exit assistance before she was ready.

> And yet they want to push and push and push and push because you know I have all these certificates. I can flag, I can be a nurse, I can… you know and I keep saying *I can't* you know. There's factors, there's disease as well, you know. I'm very susceptible to contracting to different things with my condition but they want to keep pushing and pushing and pushing for me to go and deal with the elderly and I keep saying you're putting me at risk.
>
> *Debra, lone mother (guardian), 5 year old son (RRT) (BC)*

Very few Saskatchewan parents (<5) mentioned that they felt they were pushed or rushed while living on assistance. In fact, those aboriginal parents that did make some mention of it actually had under-developed or differing opinions, sometimes linked to whether they had received assistance while living on and off the reserve.

> I don't know what to think, I don't think it's… I don't see them pushing too many people to be able to do it…Because I've never, I've never really been asked to get off of it or anything.
>
> *Courtney, common law, age son (E-MC) (SK)*

> About social assistance, being on there I've noticed uh before they didn't have any push to try and get anybody off of it at all. Like even on the reserve, um, there's no, like…I was, um, on assistance on a reserve before and they were just like 'here's your cheque, here's your cheque, here's your cheque.' And they didn't have any programs on there at all to try and help people get off, but on social assistance they do.
>
> *Tamara, lone mother, 5 children (RRT) (SK)*

Jumping through them hoops is a theme that also represents how parents' lives are constrained while living on social assistance. About 20% of parents (9/46) explicitly explained that their access to benefits and their surveillance of their receipt of them requires them to jump through hoops or traverse the red tape dictated by their caseworkers and the structure of social assistance policy.

Hoops or red tape are linked to the restriction of access dimension. All the hoops in place make it harder to get social assistance in BC

> Now it's like you've got to jump through about fifty hoops till you find your people and then they'll be like oh yeah, you're approved.
>
> *Amy, lone mother, 5 month old son (E-AC) (BC)*

> Well, the government uh you know they make it difficult uh like when I came back here two years ago, or I guess two and a half years ago from Manitoba, they made it quite difficult for me to actually get back onto income assistance when I came back. I had to jump through hoops, I had to do this, I had to do this. I had to prove basically that I was incapable of working or that I had a specific reason for why I wasn't supposed to be working. And that basically was the kids and me being ill through my last pregnancy. But I still had to jump through hoops to get there…
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (BC)*

Moreover, hoops and red tape are linked to the dimension of surveillance. Parents must work within the parameters of what's expected of them while on assistance to stay on assistance. Brandon is expected to work but has yet to be placed in any mandatory work or education programming. When asked how he is then able to maintain his benefits, he replied:

> I have no idea. I don't know…I keep my mouth shut, and you know, jump through their hoops man.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

Robert explains his ability to stay on assistance similarly:

> Well, first of all the last couple of years with the Ministry has been a struggle just to keep the income assistance going. They had red-taped me to death to the point where I didn't know if I was going to be able to pay my mortgage or I mean not my mortgage, my rent. You know, from one month to the next. I was worried about oh, am I going to be able to feed my kid this month, you know. And so that was a huge factor… Yeah survival in our world is making sure we've got that paper signed, make sure we've got that stamp on there, we've got the criteria met…The hoops. That's what it is. They've got you jumping through hoops and if you don't do it, then…
>
> *Robert, lone father age daughter (E-MC) (BC)*

Scott maintains that the red tape required to maintain benefit levels and associated with work and education programming actually slows down his work search.

> I find that they're more sticking to rules and making people go through red tape that's slowing them down rather than supporting them in finding work and getting back on their feet.
>
> *Scott, lone father, age daughter (RRT) (BC)*

The 'rush, push, - pull!' and 'jumping through them hoops' themes surface across parents' interviews in all three provinces. They are important to note because they capture the intricate balance required to survive on assistance – parents' everyday life responsibilities and their barriers to seeking employment or attending work and education programming all must be weighed carefully against trying to meet or trying to appear to meet the criteria of the ideal risk taker. For those expected to work, their market relations are enforced by rushing and pushing. For those unexpected to work and who need more time on assistance, they are aware that they too must continue to jump through hoops, not asking 'why?' but 'how high?' in order to maintain their receipt of benefits.

Parents' Management of Work/Family Conflict

Parents in paid work have developed multiple ways of lessening work/family conflict. To name just a few popular choices of two parent families, mothers can choose a 'mommy track' in their employment or work part-time to supplement the main income of their husbands. Parents can also hire a nanny or work opposite shifts or even take advantage of family friendly policies if available. Parents on assistance have also adopted unique strategies to manage structural determination of their lives and the work/family conflict associated with it. For a small minority of parents (<5), this simply means they *don't rock the boat.* While not enough parents shared this strategy to classify it as a major theme, *don't rock the boat* refers to parents' opinions that if they are not being pushed too heavily into seeking employment, it is better to avoid making contact with caseworkers.

> Well sometimes you know I, they don't contact me about it, they don't bug me so I'm not going to rock the boat, just let it ride.
>
> *Robert, lone father, daughter (E-MC) (BC)*

> I don't, I don't interact a lot with my worker. I just fill out the card at the end of the month. I kind of just want to avoid the office as most as I can.
>
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

Across the provinces, other parents maintain that it is necessary to **learn the system** to reduce conflict in their daily lives, such as by accessing additional resources. This theme captures parents who have actually adapted or realize they must adapt to the policy constraints imposed upon them to ensure they do the best they can while on income assistance.

> Yeah, and it's, in a way you kind of feel like… if you know how to use the system kind of thing. Some people they've been on and off, and they know about the system or they've talked to enough people that know what's going on and, and other people they just have no clue. Like it's just like, and it's, it's sad to think that you had to be, you have to… it's almost intuitive.
>
> *Miranda, lone mother, 3 children (RRT) (AB)*

Learning the system actually can even benefit parents who take the initiative to do so since the resources that are available to them are not always adequately advertised.

> Um, if you, if you do research, there's enough, like there's a big list right in the welfare office about four or five pages long of, of like food and clothing and shelter and um like legal and all kinds of things where you can go and you can get help with this and it's not gonna cost you, or it's gonna cost you minimal because of your situation, right… There's lots of stuff, you just have to look for it. And, but you don't know, that's another problem. They don't tell you about anything.
>
> *Paula, lone mother, 6 year old son (E-MC) (BC)*

> So, you know, you have to really know the legislation to be able to benefit at all. If you don't know anything about the legislation, then you're gonna get your straight cheque once a month, that's it, there you go. Come back, give us your stub, you'll get another cheque next month. But if you know the legislation, you can get those extra things, which we are all entitled to. But they do not let legislation be known, publicly known. You have to…
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> And there's so many resources out there uh, but at the same time there's so many people out there that don't take the time to educate themselves, to find out, to ask questions. And I always tell people there's no such thing as a stupid question.
>
> *Georgia, lone mother, 4 children (RRT) (SK)*

A related tactic of learning the system is to *fight the system*. This strategy refers to a select group of parents (<5) who choose to question and fight the system on the basis of what they have learned is expected of them and what they can access while living on social assistance. Fighting means that they use more aggressive tactics to ensure they receive all that they feel they are 'entitled' to.

> Right now I'm going to be doing battle with the system. Um, I'm going to try to go on a temporary um, disability, which means that I can still educate. I was an RTA. I can't do that anymore. I'm very *limited* in what I can do. Um, anyway, so this will be my next battle with them is to try to say, you know, it's not that I want to lay down and do nothing. I just need that extra support should anything happen, right? And, from there they have a program apparently called Achieve that is just opening up. And it will be for people with disabilities and help us find a direction that we can go. Is that what their intention is? I don't know. I've done a lot of different things over the years with the system and I really don't have a lot of trust, you know? So, this will be my next battle and that actually starts this afternoon when I go to the doctor and get the form filled out.
>
> *Debra, lone mother (guardian), 5 year old son (RRT) (BC)*

> Well, when my rent is late, it's another $25 on top of my rent when it's late. So when my cheque doesn't show up at the house three days before the end of the month like it's supposed to and I have to chase them down for two weeks to try and find it, you know I get all these surcharges on my rent and then all the money that I do get from them goes there. I get my money but I have to fight for it all the time. You know. It's crazy.
>
> *Jessica, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (SK)*

For Tracy Lynn in Alberta, fighting can even mean taking it all the way to the Premier's office.

> When Ralph Klein gave us that twenty dollars, I phoned Ralph Klein and I told him thank you so much for the kick in the ass you know…I phoned his woman, well his secretary eh, and I talked. I ripped her ear off for about half an hour. I said you know it's nice that he's trying to help us out by giving us a little bit more but I mean basically that, that's nothing. That's nothing with the price of uh, food, soccer, bills you know. Your kids wanna do other things, extracurricular activities. You can't. They're growing, you need to constantly buy clothes and bikes. You know linens. Food. Like for my boys eat like grown men, and they

> will not stop. You know I have to stop them. No, that's enough. You gotta be full now. So, it's tough.
>
> *Tracy Lynn, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (AB)*

Other parents resist the policy constraints placed upon them by taking it upon themselves to **play the system**. By far the most dominant theme of managing conflict, 52% of parents (24/46) in some way discussed how they make the system work for them, whether it is by not following the rules and regulations or following the rules and regulations only to the extent that they are of benefit to them (re: enforcement and surveillance dimensions). Playing the system can be as simple as reporting fraudulent job searches. Resistance to the enforcement dimension occurs in this way. The phone book is an excellent way for parents to appear like they are meeting their employability requirements.

> Brandon: I do probably half of it, and fake the other half… Phone book for about fifty percent of it.
> Interviewer: And is it because it's too much what they're asking of you? Or what do you think?
> Brandon: I it's probably not too much but uh, it's, it's sometimes, sometimes I have no problem putting in thirty applications a month. Other times I dunno it seems like I get nothing done, so… But you gotta do it every month so or you're cut off so you got to…it's better to keep your mouth shut, do what you can and then fake the rest of it.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

Michelle maintains that since there are no confirmations of these job searches by caseworkers, it is possible to get away with deceptive reporting.

> Michelle: That's why you look, you can look through the phone book and pick anything out. Like where you have experience in…
> Interviewer: They never follow up?
> Michelle: No, they don't phone because how many people have to send these in? And if they had to phone all these places? It would be too much, too much trouble.
>
> *Michelle, common law, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

Failing to report the outside monetary support that parents receive from other family or non-family members as income is an additional way that parents play the system.

> They [adult sons] would give me cash whenever they can… But if I was to report every income that I got to social assistance… they would cut off everything. Even if I, like even if my friend gives me $50, if I report that, that comes up. So everything, even if I went, you know, went to Bingo, won a $100, and reported that. That comes off. Any kind of income you get and you report, it comes off… So when my kids give me cash, I'm not going to tell them. You know.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), son (E-MC) (SK)*

Candace explains that once she attends court to settle custody with her ex-partner, she will be entitled to support payments. However, she has negotiated so that he will still pay her what he did when they initially split up. She will not report this extra money as income.

> Like probably a hundred and fifty bucks a month. That's what they'll ask. So I told him I think to compensate for her and I, you should still be paying the three hundred so that I at least get something to put towards her. Cuz I said you and I both know the government will take that money. They're not going to put it into her healthcare, they're not gonna put it into nothing. They're gonna take the money so that they don't have to pay me to live essentially. Like you're, the money you pay in surveillance they deduct dollar for dollar cuz they don't wanna fork out that extra money.
>
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

The above quotes are evidence that some parents do appear to take advantage of the system. However, of greater concern in this study is how playing the system does not just occur because parents are deviant, social outcasts, or con-artists. These quotes from parents also imply that playing the system occurs when benefit amounts do not alleviate poverty and when policy constraints, such as mandatory dollar for dollar deductions of support payments, harm parents rather than support them. Doreen offers an excellent illustration of why she thinks it is both possible and impossible to avoid playing the system as a result of these kinds of dilemmas.

> Certainly, and uh because of that, that's why it's so hard is because people abuse the system. They almost force you to lie in some cases. I think you've heard that probably by somebody else already. We have no choice or. I think you do. I think that, I mean you may make less and yes they may cut you off for being honest. You can't make any kind of money. You can't get ahead in any way, shape or form. But at the end of the day, I mean it's you that you have to deal with anyway. So we don't, we deal as honestly as we can. But there's other people that just can't make it. Otherwise they can't, they have to have you know either she'll go on welfare and he'll go up north and work. And there's so much of that here. Or you know whatever, and that's just so that they can provide a good life for their kids. It's not so that hey can get rich. Nobody goes on welfare to get rich. I don't care what scam they're running. Nobody goes on welfare to get rich. You know, they go on it to get by.
>
> *Doreen, common law, 6 children (E-MC) (SK)*

Relying on outside familial or non-familial **support networks** is an additional way parents manage work/family conflict. The sub-theme *helpful support* refers to 91% of parents (42/46) who reported that they can rely on others, family or friends, to help them out. Fifteen parents reported that they did not have any outside family members they could rely on for support.

> What I have done is I have put a system in place that pretty much, um, not always but pretty much at any given moment should something arise, I have a place to put my little one. To meet that need, right? Through friends and ah, yeah. And so I'm pretty blessed that way. Um, that I have been able to line that up.
>
> *Debra, lone mother (guardian), 5 year old son (RRT) (BC)*

> So, I have, like I have a pretty good support system for family like. Like a huge extended family, my birth family as well. We're all in touch with them…My one roommate mostly cuz he only works weekends, so he helps me a lot. Like weekends and holidays mostly. So, during the week he usually watches the kids for me if I've got running around to do or, so it helps.
>
> *Miranda, lone mother, 3 children (RRT) (AB)*

Most often, this helpful support involves an exchange-type relationship.

> My mom's helped me out too you know with food and stuff like that…you know like the electrical can get pretty high sometimes. I have been using the Food Bank a lot, but she helps with uh, she'll help with food when she can and um just even friends you know. Like we'll help each other out you know. This month I'm having a bad month or whatever so they'll help me out. And then I'll help them out another time or whatever.
>
> *Nadine, common law, 2 children (RRT-E) (AB)*

> My sister, and she has four kids, so like when we cruise together we have nine kids altogether. So I'm helping her with hers so she can get out and about because she has the little tiny ones, that really ties her home cuz she doesn't wanna venture out. And I always tell her I've been through this.
>
> *Tamara, lone mother, 5 children (RRT) (SK)*

One disheartening strategy that parents rely upon in order to manage the demands they face is to engage in the act of **pawning**. Two lone mothers from Alberta reported that they pawned more often when they were part of two parent families. For other families, pawning is regularly resorted to when the demands of family care relations, including food and entertainment, outweigh what parents' receive in benefit amounts.[59]

> I've pawned, well, our VCR and our movies in the pawn shop. Because we're short on diapers, now. You know, food.
>
> *Courtney, common law, 1 son (E-MC) (SK)*

> Mm, mostly it would be for food. Yeah. And some things, it would be mostly for the kids wanting to do things, do stuff. And I never had any money on hand to do anything. So we would pawn stuff… pawning it back and taking it out.
>
> *Theresa, lone mother, 6 children (RRT) (SK)*

For Michelle and Joseph, pawning is not viewed as overly problematic since they ensure their children are cared for before they pawn any items for their own or their children's entertainment.

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[59] It is likely that more parents engage in this activity than those who reported it in the in-depth interviews (14). This is because the act of pawning did not come up until my interview with Reanne, a lone mother on assistance in Alberta. From the point of her interview onward, parents were asked whether or not they engage in pawning and for what reason.

> [D]ean, he was, now he had gone to jail again. And I always pawned because I was so tired of being stuck at home. It wasn't the food issue because I always bought my food, like my sort of time so I would not have to worry about food during the month. And I spent a lot of time at my moms too when he was in jail. So I used to pawn like my VCR or my t.v. Like things like that just so I could drop off of the kids at my moms, give her some money for babysitting. Then I'd go to Bingo or I used to go out with my friends, you know. So it would just be for entertainment.
>
> *Michelle, common law, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

> Yeah, but it wasn't for making ends meet. It's just to go do something.
>
> *Joseph, lone father, eight year old son (RRT) (SK)*

Jessica's experience, however, highlights how easy it is to deceive one's self that pawning is okay because children's needs are met. In her case, pawning permitted her drug habit. Although such a habit may not interfere with the semblance of normality in her home, it can interfere with the meeting of children's emotional needs.

> My pawning came, in fact I did pawn when I was using. A lot. A lot. Um, I always, I never thought I had a problem because I was *responsible.* So when I got money, I would buy groceries, I'd pay the bills, blah, blah, blah. But then I'd pawn the t.v., I'd pawn the video games, I'd pawn everything else so I could buy my drugs, so.
>
> *Jessica, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (SK)*

In one unique case, Nadine, who is in the process of exiting assistance since she found employment, actually pawned her television in order to pay for the transportation she needed to go to work

> Interviewer: Have you ever had things so bad um, that you've pawned anything or used pawnshops in any way?
> R: Yeah. That's where my TV is.
> Interviewer: Oh, where your TV is right now. Okay. And is that while you were on assistance?
> R: Yeah, so I could get a bus pass to go to work… We only do it when we're broke so like if there's something we absolutely need.
>
> *Nadine, common law, 2 children (RRT-E) (AB)*

Pawning, however, creates a viscous cycle (placing items in the shop, buying them back for more money, placing them once again in the shop, buying them back once more, etc.) that is very difficult to escape. For Reanne, the cycle of pawning was linked to how her child support payment was deducted from her benefit allowance, meaning she had to make up the difference for the cost of her rent.

> Reanne: My rent right now is $260 and I get $255 or something like that. I don't even get enough to pay my rent cuz of my child support payment.
> Interviewer: So how do you make it ends meet?
> Reanne: Constantly picking in this and pawning that and getting it out there and…I try to buy groceries for the whole month. It's hard. Half way through the month I got to take my pawn in and then I got to take that out because I won't leave my pawn. And, it's constantly, we do food banks…
> Interviewer: What do you mean by when you take your pawn in and then you take it back? How does that work?
> Reanne: I take all my videos in, they give me a buck a video, and then at the month when I get my child tax, I buy it back. And that's for $20 more…And I've been in and out of this cycle since I've been on my own. This pawn cycle. It's just horrible.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (SK)*

Brandon has also experienced the negative side of pawning:

> [T]he kid's Nintendo 64, it's an old game system with ten games. I pawned it for forty bucks. But I could probably get more but I don't cuz it cost me fifty bucks to get it back out. So that's a rough way to make ends meet cuz it always costs you more in the end. So I try not to do that.
>
> *Brandon, lone father, 5 year old daughter (RRT) (SK)*

There are two interesting twists to the pawn cycle. First, some parents will pawn their children's entertainment items (e.g. videos, video games) in order to provide food for them. So, while the demand of daily meals is met, entertainment is decreased. Second, some parents will actually further exacerbate their total debts by asking family members to help pay off pawn shops until they can afford their items.

> Janice: I have a stereo in the pawn shop and my DVD/VCR combo.

> Interviewer: And why did you put them there?
> Janice: Because we were running low on some groceries. Like on fruit and milk and stuff like that…Well I feel bad because like, you know, my kids like watching their movies and stuff like that. And plus at times it kind of gets hard to try and get them all. I, actually I thought I was going to lose my VCR/DVD combo but I ended up borrowing money from my mom to pay the interest on it for another three months, so. Because it gets hard to pay things, you know, to keep up with bills and trying to get things out of the pawn and.
>
> *Janice, lone mother, 2 children (E-FR)(SK*

To summarize, there are a multitude of ways that parents try to better balance the demands of their family care relations and policy constraints associated with employability. Even for parents not expected to work, there is still the need to either learn or play the system in some way. Certainly some of the ways of managing conflict contribute to the stereotype of parents on assistance as 'lazy, dependent bums.' However, it is the contention of this study that only some parents are indeed 'abusing' the system. Others are only trying to make the system work for them in order to survive and they do so by managing the juggling of their market and family care relations in the best manner they see possible.

Unravelling the Contradictions

There are similarities in the everyday activities of parents across the western provinces. Like parents in paid work, parents on assistance engage in activities of social reproduction. Parents who are designated as employable do actively seek work. Regardless of whether they are deemed employable or not, they also engage in full-time caregiving responsibilities. Each of these activities, however, interfere with one another and, thus, parents face conflict as a result of trying to balance their market relations (or expected market relations) with their family care relations.

Like parents in paid work, parents on assistance experience time crunches and feelings of overload. What makes their work/family conflict different from that of parents in paid work is that they also experience numerous barriers to trying to live on assistance, let alone exit assistance: income-related barriers; human capital barriers; child care responsibilities; and systemic racism. Parents also feel the push/pull dynamics of social assistance policy as constraining or even determining their daily lives, as evidenced by their reference to 'jumping through hoops.'

There are some province-specific differences in the work/family conflict of parents on assistance. In BC, parents are more concerned with issues of dependence on the system than in the other two provinces. This could be because BC's second wave of reform was quite recent (years after Alberta's dramatic reforms) and involved excessively punitive regulations compared to all other provinces. What is perhaps more interesting about this finding is that any parents' (regardless of province) opinion that abuse of the system must be eradicated illustrates how the discourse of employability constructed via all five dimensions gains a 'truth' within parents own lives.

Parents' concerns surrounding abuse of the system illustrate that some parents buy into the rhetoric that dependency on assistance can be eliminated through active assistance programming. Such an observation is interesting since one could predict that parents are more interested in demystifying stigma surrounding social assistance usage rather than perpetuating it. Once on assistance, the fact that parents are exposed to, or even partake, in abuse of the system is a possible reason that they also construct stigmatic images of individuals living on assistance. This interpretation also illustrates the structure/agency dialectic of living on assistance. Parents are aware that the structure of social assistance policy is designed to reduce dependence and any abuse of the system. Parents who do take advantage of the system, however, are knowingly or unknowingly displaying agency. Parents who point to others as abusers of assistance are also constructing themselves in images of the ideal, responsible risk taker. In this way, these parents are confirming their awareness that they must work within the policy constraints of their agency in order to remain entitled to assistance.

Considering other provincial differences, Alberta parents still report finding it difficult to manage the expectation that they should seek work even when they and the general public are aware that the economy is booming. Some parents pointed to the low minimum wage as deterring their efforts to seek employment since they knew they could never afford day care on the income they would receive. In contrast, what stands out as unique about the experiences of parents in Regina is that they experience similar barriers to seeking work and as sources of conflict but do so living in a city characterized by systemic racism. Thus, for aboriginal parents, they potentially experience multiple, not double or triple, jeopardies (e.g. their aboriginal status, low-income, health problems, addiction problems), that can exacerbate their efforts at getting off of assistance. Finally, a last important finding to note is that BC and Alberta parents feel the push to get off of assistance much greater than parents in Saskatchewan. Indeed, the fact that several lone mothers in Saskatchewan denied that they had been approached about seeking work, despite what the policy dictates, was very revealing.

The work/family conflict experiences of parents on assistance show the roles that structure and agency play within their lives. Simultaneously, parents allude to how policy constraints overly determine their everyday behaviours and yet also infer how they are active agents in balancing their family's needs. For example, it was not unusual to meet parents who both learned the system and played the system at the same time.

It is the evidence of this work/family conflict that suggests that parents' social citizenship rights to assistance on the basis of their employability efforts do not always match with their everyday realities. Here, it useful to draw the connection between the results of this chapter and the broader classification of contemporary society as a risk society that has played a central role in this study. Parents who are deemed responsible risk takers face multiple risks, not just those associated with their market attachment. Should they stay on assistance for long periods of time, investing in their human capital through welfare-to-work programming and actively seeking employment, they face poverty, and poor health. If they do successfully exit assistance, they still potentially face this risk of poverty simply because they may not have the skills (human capital) to find a good job or the resources (financial or emotional) needed to maintain it. Parents who are exempt from seeking work not only face poverty but experience stressors associated with the structure of social assistance policy, often in the form of trying to meet their own and their children's needs.

The crux of the matter is that the reflexivity and capability parents require to be active, market citizens depends on their good mental and physical health, quality education, access to social networks and other social supports (e.g. day care), and adequate financial resources. Until this disjuncture is fully recognized in social assistance policy, it is doubtful that low-income parents will experience welfare-to-work programming as anything but an oppressive leveller rather than the economic boon it is hoped and purported to be by provincial governments.

Summary

In this chapter, the focus has been on answering the final research question of this study: Do policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance shape and/or conflict with their everyday market relations and family care relations?

First, the literature on the work/family conflict of parents in paid work was reviewed in order to draw parallels between the experiences of parents in paid work and parents on assistance. To show how employability as a basis to claim income support conflicts with parents' everyday market and family care relations, four areas were reviewed: the 'doings' of parents on assistance; their thoughts on the employability emphasis; their perceptions of their social citizenship rights; and, finally, their experiences of work/family conflict as a result of a multitude of barriers. In particular, by revealing the barrier of policy constraints and what parents do to manage conflict, it was possible to show how the structural determination of parents' lives on assistance and their active agency in order to resist this determination occurs simultaneously.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

There are three main objectives of this final Chapter. First, I summarize the major findings of this study, reminding readers of the conclusions drawn in each of the preceding chapters. The implications of these findings for social assistance policy are then discussed. Finally, the possibility of incorporating a 'differentiated universalism' approach in the design of newer, positive reforms in all three provinces is suggested. Within each of the latter two chapter sections, parents' own thoughts and ideas are included. This integration of what parents have to say is based on my assumption that the structure of social assistance policy cannot advance unless very clear understandings of the everyday experiences of people actually experiencing policy constraints are considered and included in future change.

Prior to fulfilling these three objectives, it is necessary to provide closure to this examination of the gendered transformation of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance in the three western provinces, 1993-2004. An excellent way to do this is to review the impact of the reforms through descriptive statistics on the rates of social assistance usage and poverty over the time period of interest. It is the review of these statistics that highlights that poverty is indeed the most glaring of the fault lines associated with social assistance policy within the social investment citizenship regime. Moreover, it is these statistics that further shed light on the policy importance of understanding the everyday realities of parents on assistance.

The Impact of the Reforms

Trends in Social Assistance Rates, 1993-2004

As observed in Chapter 2, social assistance usage peaked in the early to mid-1990s amongst all family types across Canada. Singles and couples experienced peak usage in 1993, couples with children experienced peak usage in 1994, and lone mothers' usage peaked in 1995. All groups experienced significant declines from 1995 onward (Finnie, Irvine, and Sceviour 2005).[60] Provincially, a similar story emerges. All provinces experienced increased social assistance rates between 1992 and 1993, followed by a downward trend from 1994 and 1995 onward (Finnie et al. 2005; Sceviour and Finnie 2004).

Over the period 1993 to 2004, Roy (2004) observes a marked drop in the rate of persons on assistance. Whereas the Atlantic region experienced a decline of 35%, and Central Canada experienced a decline of 40%, Roy explains that the largest decline of 48% occurred in the Western region. In the west, this overall decline was mostly due to the dramatic decrease in caseloads in BC and Alberta over this period (see Tables 6.0 and 6.1). And, compared to all other Canadian provinces, the decline in social assistance usage in Alberta was by far the greatest. Between 1993 and 2004, the 70.5% drop in the number of people on assistance meant that by 2003, it had the lowest rate of usage of 1.8% (see Tables 6.0 and 6.1). In contrast, BC's 2003 social assistance rate of 4.4% is the second lowest of all Canadian provinces. Saskatchewan's rate (5.3%) is comparable to the rates in Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island. Unlike the dramatic declines experienced by BC and Alberta and compared to all other provinces, Saskatchewan experienced the smallest decline in rates of usage (22%).

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[60] Finnie et al. (2005) rely upon data from the Longitudinal Administrative Database (LAD), 1992-2000 (see source for more details on sampling).

Table 6.0: Number of Social Assistance Recipients by Province, 1993-2003 ('000)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	% Decline
BC	323.3	353.5	374.3	369.9	321.3	297.4	275.2	262.4	252.9	241.2	180.7	**-44.1%**
AB	196.0	138.5	113.2	105.6	89.8	77.0	71.9	64.8	58.0	53.8	57.8	**-70.5%**
SK	68.2	81.0	82.2	80.6	79.7	72.5	66.5	63.8	60.9	56.1	53.2	**-22.0%**
MB	88.0	89.3	85.2	85.8	79.1	72.7	68.7	63.6	60.5	60.1	59.9	-31.9%
ON	1287.0	1379.3	1344.6	1214.6	1149.6	1091.3	910.0	802.0	709.2	687.6	673.9	-47.6%
QC	741.4	787.2	802.2	813.2	793.3	725.7	661.3	618.9	576+.6	560.8	544.2	-26.6%
NB	98.7	73.5	67.4	67.1	70.6	67.1	61.8	56.3	52.9	50.7	49.3	-50.1%
NS	98.7	104.1	104.0	103.1	93.7	85.5	80.9	73.7	66.8	61.5	58.3	-40.9%
P.E.I.	12.6	13.1	12.4	11.7	11.1	10.9	9.8	8.4	7.9	7.5	7.0	-44.4%
NF	68.1	67.4	71.3	72.0	71.9	64.6	59.9	59.4	54.4	52.1	51.2	-24.8%
Canada	2975.0	3100.3	3070.9	2937.1	2774.9	2577.5	2279.1	2085.1	1910.9	1842.6	1745.6	-41.3%

Source: Roy (2004: 3.2)

Table 6.1: Social Assistance Rate by Province, 1993-2003 (%)[a]

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
BC	9.2	9.8	10.0	9.7	8.2	7.5	6.9	6.5	6.2	5.9	4.4
AB	7.4	5.2	4.2	3.8	3.2	2.7	2.5	2.2	1.9	1.7	1.8
SK	6.8	8.0	8.1	7.9	7.8	7.1	6.5	6.3	6.1	5.6	5.3
MB	7.9	8.0	7.6	7.6	7.0	6.4	6.0	5.5	5.3	5.2	5.2
ON	12.1	12.8	12.4	11.0	10.3	9.7	8.0	6.9	6.0	5.7	5.5
QC	10.4	11.0	11.1	11.2	10.9	10.0	9.0	8.4	7.8	7.6	7.3
NB	10.4	9.8	9.0	8.9	9.4	8.9	8.2	7.5	7.1	6.8	6.6
NS	10.7	11.2	11.2	11.1	10.0	9.2	8.7	7.9	7.2	6.6	6.2
P.E.I.	9.6	9.9	9.3	8.7	8.2	8.0	7.2	6.2	5.8	5.5	5.1
NF	11.7	11.7	12.5	12.8	12.9	11.8	11.2	11.2	10.4	10.0	9.9
Canada	10.4	10.8	10.5	10.0	9.3	8.6	7.5	6.8	6.2	5.9	5.5

Source: Roy (2004: 3.2)

a. The social assistance rate = the number of people on assistance/ total population.

Roy (2004) cautions that these descriptive statistics do not serve to demonstrate any specific cause and effect relationships between the decline in social assistance usage, improved provincial economies and/or the impact of reforms. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw some tentative links between these variables. For example, Table 6.1 shows that in both 1996 and 2003, the social assistance rate declined in BC one year after the two major waves of reform, the introduction of *BC Benefits* in 1995 and *BC Employment and Income Assistance* in 2002. And even Roy draws attention to the large decrease in social assistance usage in BC as partially linked to the new policy constraint of time limits.

Table 6.1 shows that the drop in Alberta's rate occurred in 1994 and 1995. According to Roy (2004), the strong job growth in Alberta is not the sole cause of this sharp decrease nor is a reduction in benefits levels. This is because Alberta made its larger cuts to benefit levels before 1993, especially for single individuals. Sceviour and Finnie (2004) offer an additional explanation. They maintain that the combination of high exit rates with low entry rates due to tightened eligibility in the early 1990s at least partially explains Albertan's low social assistance usage. As observed in this study, tightened eligibility was just one of several dramatic 1993 reforms illustrative of the restriction dimension. Given that a sharp decline in rates occurred immediately following this year, the reforms brought about in 1993 are at least another possible explanatory factor.

Even though Alberta's assistance rate is still the lowest, it was also the only western province to experience an increase between 2002 and 2003, albeit a very small one (+1%). The 2003 annual report documented a 4.7% caseload increase in *SFI* recipients and attributed it to several reasons: more people moving to Alberta for work;

growth in clients who require long-term intervention in order to move them into employment; growth in those unemployable due to multiple barriers; and increased awareness of SFI for coverage of emergency benefits (e.g. utility arrears) (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2003a: 57). Considering Saskatchewan, rates of usage declined steadily from 1998 onward, around the time the *Building Independence* initiative was fully implemented. Although there was a drop in assistance rates after 2000, a still further decline was contradicted by the slow job growth, poor crop conditions and low grain prices (Roy 2004).

The decline in social assistance usage across the provinces would appear to suggest that fewer families are faring poorly economically and that governments are successful at eradicating dependence on state benefits. And yet, such an interpretation drastically overlooks the poverty and other social problems experienced by parents on assistance that have been comprehensively delineated throughout this study. Indeed, at the same time that a decrease in caseloads was occurring between 1993 and 2004, the gap between the rich and the poor was increasing not lessening.

Poverty Trends

Data from the 2001 Census show that the median income of families and the incidence of low-income changed little over the 1990s.[61] However, the data also reveal that differences in income are becoming increasingly polarized.[62] Comparing Census data for 1990 and 2000, Statistics Canada (2003) reports that there was little or no change in the incomes of families within the bottom 10% of the income distribution. In contrast, the top 10%, families with highest incomes experienced substantial gains (14.6%). In 2000, the top 10% had incomes above $117,850 compared to incomes of below $18,990 for the bottom 10%. For every poor family's $1 of income, the wealthiest families had a before-tax income of $18 (Statistics Canada 2003). The 2001 Census reveals that the number of low-income families increased by 11.6%, from 935,000 in 1990 to 1,050,000 in 2000.

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[61] After adjusting for inflation, the median income was $54,560 in 1990 compared to $55,016 in 2000 (Statistics Canada 2003).

[62] Income data from the 2001 Census are analyzed utilizing specific operational definitions of family income, family, and poverty. Family income is measured as the combined income of all family members

Statistics Canada data consistently show that lone parent families are the most impoverished of all low-income families. For the first time in two decades, however, lone parent families with children under 18 years of age actually experienced significant improvements to their income. Before-tax incomes indicate that the proportion of lone parents living in low-income actually fell. Whereas 54% of lone parent families were low-income in 1990 (55% in 1980), 46% were low-income in 2000. The median income of lone parents was $26,008 in 2000, up from $21, 797 in 1990. Additional Census data enable Statistics Canada to attribute this 19.3% increase to parents' greater labour market activity and increased support from government transfers. Although such a decrease is positive, the Canadian Council of Social Development (2003) cautions that a lower low-income rate does not lessen the need to eradicate poverty among lone parent families. The median income of lone parent families was only 40% of the before tax median income of couples with children. This disparity in income reflects how in 2001 more than

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from all sources before income taxes are deducted (e.g. wages, net income from self-employment, investment income, retirement pensions, other money income and all government transfer income). Families are defined according to the 'census family' definition provided in the 2001 Census dictionary. Since the original definition was revised for the 2001 Census, some of the changes in the income of families observed over time are due to this change in definition. Low-income is determined by comparing the incomes of families or unattached individuals with Statistics Canada's before-tax, 1992 base Low-Income Cut Offs (LICOs) (see footnote 58 for more information on LICOs) (Statistics Canada 2003).

75% of low-income couples were dual earner households (Statistics Canada 2003). Moreover, children in lone parent families experienced low-income more often than children in two parent families; their poverty was exacerbated when a lone parent had no income earnings.

The *Poverty Profile 2001*, produced on behalf of the National Council of Welfare (NCW) (2004) also documents the incidence, severity and depth of poverty across Canada from 1980 to 2001.[63] Aside from confirming that there is a dramatic gap between the incomes of the rich and the poor, NCW also observes a slight decrease in the 2001 national poverty rate compared to the 2000 rate, 14.4% *versus* 14.7%, respectively.[64] However, both rates are still higher than the 1989 national rate of 13.9%, the year the Canadian House of Commons resolved to end child poverty by 2000. According to NCW's calculations, the largest depth of poverty is experienced by two-parent families where both parents are under age 25 and have children under 18 years of age; their incomes were an average of $10,265 below the poverty line (National Council of Welfare

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[63] Instead of using Census data, NCW relies upon data drawn from two Statistics Canada household surveys, the Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF, 1980 to 1995 data) and the Survey and Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID, 1996 to 2001 data).

[64] The National Council of Welfare uses the term poverty rate in the same way Statistics Canada refers to low-income. NCW calculates poverty rates by comparing the incomes of families or unattached individuals with Statistics Canada's before-tax, 1992 base LICOs. The LICOs refer to levels of income where 20% more is spent on food, shelter, and clothing than that which is spent by average Canadians. According to 1992 data, the average Canadian family spent 34.7% of their gross income on food, shelter and clothing; low-income Canadians are understood to have spent 54.7% or more on these basic needs. LICOs vary by size of family unit (seven categories) and the population of the area of residence (five community sizes, from rural areas to cities with 500,000 or more). Data from the Consumer Price Index enable the cut-offs to be updated annually (National Council of Welfare, 2004). The National Council of Welfare regards LICOs as poverty lines. In the data referred to, families are defined as 'economic families,' which consist of households of two or more persons where everyone is related by blood, marriage or adoption. The five common types of economic families include: couples 65 and older, couples under 65 with no children under 18, two-parent families under 65 with children under age 18, families with children under age 18 headed by lone mothers, and families with children under 18 headed by lone fathers. Statistics for provinces do not include couples age 65 and over and lone fathers with children under age 18 due to the small sizes of these groups in each province (National Council of Welfare 2004).

2004b).[65] In 2001, lone mothers also fared considerably worse than lone fathers. The poverty rate for lone mothers was 42.4% compared to 19.3% for lone fathers.

The *Poverty Profile 2001* also provides data on the family economic conditions across the provinces. Table 6.2 shows that in the west, both Alberta and Saskatchewan had lower rates of poverty among families in 2001 (9.6 and 10.3, respectively) than in 1993 (15.1 and 14.1, respectively) (NCW, 2004b). In contrast, poverty conditions did not improve in BC. There was hardly any change in the poverty rate for 1993 and 2001. In fact, BC's 2001 rate of 13.1% was higher than the 1989 rate of 11.8% (data not shown). Compared to all other provinces, Alberta and BC are on the opposite sides of the spectrum. In 2001, Alberta had the third lowest rate whereas BC had the second highest rate of poverty (see Table 6.2). Of all three western provinces, only BC had a poverty rate higher than the national rate (11.0%) for families. In addition, BC lone mother families experienced poverty to a greater extent than lone mother families in Alberta but were not much worse off than Saskatchewan lone parent families or two parent families in Alberta. In 2001, the poverty rate for lone mother families was 47.4% and 10.9% for two parent families in BC. In Saskatchewan, the poverty rate was 42.9% for lone mother families and 9.0% for two parent families, whereas in Alberta it was 39.0% for lone mother families and 9.9% for two parent families (data not shown) (NCW, 2004).

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[65] Although the same formula for calculating low income is used by NCW and Statistics Canada's analysis of Census data, different data sets and measurements of the family (e.g. economic family *versus* census family) used by NCW result in different poverty statistics between the two agencies. Data produced by NCW is included here because of their emphasis on differences, e.g. gender differences, across the provinces.

Table 6.2 Poverty Rate of Poor Families by Province, 1993-2001(%) [a]

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
BC	13.4	12.2	12.8	13.9	12.6	12.2	13.6	12.9	13.1
AB	15.1	13.0	14.2	14.7	12.3	11.5	9.7	9.7	9.6
SK	14.1	12.8	13.0	13.4	11.8	11	10.2	11.5	10.3
MB	14.6	13.6	14.2	16.3	16.8	14.3	13.8	13.1	12.8
ON	13.1	11.5	12.6	12.8	12.6	10.8	10.3	8.9	9.2
QC	16.8	16.2	16.4	18.2	17.6	16.7	14.4	12.8	12.7
NB	12.1	12.5	15.5	13.3	14.0	12.9	11.6	10.7	11.4
NS	14.4	14.2	14.6	14.9	14.9	14.6	12.8	11.5	12.1
P.E.I.	7.4	7.4	9.5	11.1	10.8	9.3	10.8	10.1	9.5
NF	16.8	18.6	19.3	17.5	16.7	16.1	16.6	16.7	14.8
Canada	14.4	13.3	14.1	14.8	14.1	12.9	12.0	11.0	11.0

Source: National Council of Welfare (2004)
a. Lone mother, lone father, and two parent families with children under 18 are included in these rates.

In the document *Welfare Incomes 2004*, the NCW utilizes LICOs to examine the poverty trends amongst recipients of social assistance and other welfare benefits (Canada Child Tax Benefit, federal GST credit). In the Chapter 2 discussion of poverty as a major fault line, I noted that parents' total assistance incomes in 2004, including national child benefits, provincial benefits, and the GST credit, were not enough to prevent parents from experiencing poverty in all three provinces (National Council of Welfare 2005). It was also observed that the 2002 child poverty rate in all three provinces was higher than the national average (Campaign 2000 2004). Table 6.3 further illustrates the financial inadequacy of the benefits parents receive in each of the three provinces by showing the poverty line (or LICO) for the province's largest city, the poverty gap (difference between the poverty line and welfare income), and total welfare income as a percentage of the poverty line.[66]

Table 6.3: Adequacy of 2004 Benefits (Estimated)

	Household	Total Welfare Income	Poverty Line	Poverty Gap	%
BC					
	Lone parent family[a] (one child)	$13,778	$25,319	-$11,541	54%
	Two parent family (two children)	$18,258	$37,791	-$19,533	48%
AB					
	Lone parent family	$12,151	$25,319	-$13,168	48%
	Two parent family	$19,166	$37,791	-$18,625	51%
SK					
	Lone parent family	$12,535	$21,804	-$9,269	57%
	Two parent family	$18,751	$32,546	-$13,795	58%

Source: National Council of Welfare (2003)
a. Welfare incomes and poverty lines are estimated for lone parent families with one child and two parent families with two children.

% = Welfare income as a % poverty line

Considering lone parent families with one child, Alberta stands out as the province where total welfare incomes only constitute 48% of the poverty line. In fact, among all provinces, Alberta lone parents experienced the lowest welfare income. Lone parents in Saskatchewan fare better than both their Alberta and BC counterparts. With respect to couples with two children, parents in BC are worse off, followed by parents in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Across all Canadian provinces, welfare incomes for couples with children were the lowest in BC (National Council of Welfare 2005).

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[66] The estimates of total income for each family type include the basic social assistance amount and other benefits/government transfers where applicable (e.g. additional benefits, Canada Child Tax benefit, provincial child benefits, federal GST credit, and provincial tax credits) (National Council of Welfare 2005).

One final example of the poverty experienced by parents on social assistance in all three provinces ties to usage of Food Banks. Of the 515 Food Banks who participated in the 2004 Canadian Association of Food Bank's *Hunger Count*, 54.4% of clients across Canada were on social assistance; the majority of clients were engaged in some form of paid work. Data are not available on the increase in Food Bank usage among parents on social assistance but the general findings present an alarming picture of low-income in all three provinces. As of March 2004, 841,640 persons received groceries from Food Banks, an 8.5% increase from 2003 and a 123% increase from 1989 (Canadian Association of Food Banks 2004). Specific to each province, 84, 317 people relied on the Food Banks in BC in 2004, a 16% increase since 2003. Of all persons who relied on Food Banks, almost 8,000 were children, an increase of 41.7%. Alberta also experienced an increase (11.9%) in individuals' usage of Food Banks since 2003. Of the 54,574 people who received groceries in 2004, there were 2,500 additional children. Comparable to BC and Alberta, the increase in Food Bank usage in Saskatchewan is alarming. Food Banks experienced a 37% increase in the number of persons relying on them (23, 084) over one year; accounting for the increase were 2,000 additional children (Canadian Association of Food Banks 2004).

In sum, it is by considering these descriptive statistics alongside the findings presented throughout the three preceding chapters that the paradoxical story of social assistance policy and parents' experiences is made painfully clear. Creating active social assistance policy stands in direct opposition to the fact that poverty is still a major social problem in the three western provinces. In fact, it is poverty that acts as the major, over-arching barrier to parents' employability efforts and the primary force behind their experiences of work/family conflict. Parents' experiences of poverty while on social assistance, despite policy efforts to connect them to the labour market through welfare-to-work programming, is indeed the most dominant fault line of the contemporary social investment citizenship regime. Having established this crucial point, I now return to the three objectives of this chapter.

Summary of Major Findings

The major intent of this study was to explore how the reform of social assistance programs in British Columbia (BC), Alberta and Saskatchewan (1993-2004) similarly or differently involved a gendered transformation of social citizenship rights to social assistance and to examine how low-income parents' market and family care relations are embedded in this transformation. Underneath the three central questions that guided this intent, I list my findings in point form and incorporate a brief review of them where applicable.

Findings at the Level of the Research Questions

1) How do dominant political, ideological, and gendered assumptions about market relations and family care relations shape policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights to social assistance?

- Discourse analysis of annual reports and public-use policy documents from 1993-2004 reveal that there are structural, policy assumptions and strategies that create parents' social citizenship rights to assistance on the basis of their employability efforts. This discourse surrounding employability can be grouped according to five inter-related dimensions: restriction; enforcement; surveillance; downloading/sharing responsibility; and de-/re-gendering.

The restriction dimension stresses that individuals are better off working than being on assistance and are personally responsible for their own and their family's financial situation. This dimension is characterized by such strategies as restriction of benefit amounts and restriction of access. The enforcement dimension refers to parents' classification within social assistance policy (as employable or not employable) and how a classification of 'employable' involves a variety of welfare-to-work measures and practices to enforce parents' receipt of benefits contingent on their efforts to exit assistance and enter paid work. Parents on assistance are also subject to a variety of monitoring strategies in order to ensure their entitlement to benefits. These strategies are grouped according to the surveillance dimension. The downloading/sharing responsibility dimension refers to the downsizing and reorganization of each ministry concerned with social assistance and the sharing of responsibility for welfare-to-work programming across ministries within each province. Finally, the de-/-re-gendering dimension refers to strategies that both de-gender and re-gender parents' entitlement relationships and thereby implicate their everyday market relations and family care relations. All of these dimensions relate to one another in unique ways and, taken together, are powerful determinants of parents' entitlement to assistance on the basis of their active, employability efforts.

In each province's pursuit of active, welfare-to-work programming, there are some differences. For example, considering the restriction dimension, parents must undertake an obligatory job search when applying for assistance in BC but do not have to do so when applying for assistance in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Across the three ministry's, parents' employability efforts are differently enforced according to the age of their youngest child (three years of age in BC compared to six months of age in Alberta). Each provincial ministry shares the enforcement of parents' employability through the strategy of employment planning. 'Report cards' and 'voluntary eligibility audits' are strategies parents must engage in or expose themselves to in order to maintain their receipt of benefits regardless of their province of residence. With respect to the downloading/sharing responsibility dimension, it is noteworthy to observe the disappearance of the ministry of 'social services' across all three provinces. The social aspect of providing services has been downsized, reorganized and actually replaced with an employment-oriented, human resources approach to social assistance, albeit this occurred in different years in each province. Finally, parents in all three provinces are exposed to apparently gender neutral policy that, paradoxically, has gender specific effects.

- Underpinning this discourse of prioritizing parents' employability efforts are particular political/ideological assumptions shared by all three provinces, regardless of party affiliation, and with slight differences in their effects on policy design.

Designing social assistance policy so that it corresponds with the social investment citizenship regime and the uncertainty of the risk society requires following the Third Way mantra 'no rights without responsibilities.' However, as observed in Chapter 3, it is difficult to point to any one cause or several of the different ways this creeping conditionality infiltrates policy design. The erosion of social citizenship rights on the basis of need and time limits are most illustrative of the punitive nature of BC's welfare-to-work approach to parents on assistance. The province of Alberta falls into second place with its replacement of harsh cuts of the early 1990s with a mandate to assist low-income parents with a 'hand-up' not a 'hand-out.' Finally, Saskatchewan appears to be the least punitive mainly because it has attempted in recent years to create social inclusion in tandem with an emphasis on employability via active social assistance policy.

All three provinces also share the prioritization of both the individual and the market. The 'responsibilities' in question are primarily individual responsibility for one's economic security via participation in the labour market and, thus, active, civic engagement in the community rather than dependence on state social supports. The individual who is responsible for either of these two activities is assumed to be either male or female. The flip-side of this prioritization of the individual and market is that individuals' relationships with the state and family are becoming fragile. The 'last resort' characterization of social assistance programs means that many parents have to look to family members for additional safety nets, nets which are largely gendered (women provide care work not men) and not always available (re: increase in dual earner households).

Overall, the political and ideological assumptions underpinning these five dimensions act as mechanisms of social control and enable social assistance policy in all three provinces to create *responsible risk takers* who are active participants in the global market place and unhindered by their gender.

2) How are policy shifts in conceptualizing social citizenship rights to social assistance subject to the processes of de-/re-gendering?

- Feminist critiques of citizenship, coupled with the results of my discourse analysis and in-depth interviews, reveal that despite the gender neutral appearance of social assistance policy, the responsible risk taker is both de-gendered and re-gendered in their entitlement relationships

The apparent gender neutral approach to social assistance policy – both women and men are equally perceived as employable individuals – suggests the assumption of equality of opportunity and even social justice objectives. Both male and female parents are provided opportunities to improve upon their education, develop skills, and invest in themselves and their families through welfare-to-work programming. Even parents who are deemed unemployable due to health or disability related issues are afforded many opportunities to think about their possible engagement in the labour market.

However, underneath this guise of neutrality, parents are exposed to policy assumptions about their employability that are deeply gendered. The ideal responsible risk taker who is unhindered by their gender is more male than female. Themes throughout the in-depth interviews with parents further highlight the gendered assumptions parents feel that they are exposed to in their entitlement relationships with social assistance policy. For example, some lone mothers perceived that they were disentitled to provide care for their children since policy dictates their mandatory participation in welfare-to-work programming. This indicates the de-gendering of parents' caregiving responsibilities. Simultaneously, the re-gendering of their entitlement relationships was most often reflected by parents' perceptions that dominant models of family life and double standards infiltrate the structure of social assistance policy. Parents also reported their own beliefs that were in many ways inherently gendered or contributed to gender stereotypical constructions of reality.

Thus, parents' entitlement relationships with social assistance policy are bound up with a cyclical, ongoing process of de-gendering and re-gendering. Indeed, the dichotomization of each of these sub-processes is actually impossible. Two examples should suffice to illustrate this point. The very fact that lone mothers found the denial of their caregiving problematic suggests that they uphold and perpetuate gender normative assumptions about mothers' 'appropriate' behaviour. Similarly, lone fathers reported that it is upsetting that they are not recognized by policy as caregivers but rather perceived as natural breadwinners. In this way, lone fathers are also subject to re-gendering in their entitlement relationships.

3) Do policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance shape and/or conflict with their everyday market relations and family care relations?

- Discourse analysis shows that parents' market and family care relations are shaped by how their citizenship rights are conceptualized in western social assistance policy, e.g. the ideal citizen is the responsible risk taker; market participation is more important than caregiving responsibilities.
- In-depth interviews demonstrate that barriers and related policy constraints make it difficult for parents to seek and engage in paid work as expected. Because parents' market and family care relations do not necessarily match how their entitlement is conceptualized in policy, parents on assistance experience unique forms of work/family conflict.

Parents on assistance are engaged in multiple activities in their everyday lives, including job searches, participation in programs, and contributing to their communities by caring for others. Many parents, however, have mixed feelings about the emphasis on employability but do generally believe that they have a 'right' to assistance. Hence, while sometimes the emphasis on employability efforts appears to match parents' market and family care relations, for other parents this is not the case. These parents experience feelings of a time crunch and overload, much like parents in paid work do. Moreover, parents on assistance overwhelmingly experience their everyday realities living on assistance as interfering with their expected employability efforts. The majority of parents interviewed in this study juggle policy constraints of their potential employability with health related barriers, income-related barriers, family care responsibilities, and systemic racism. Across the provinces, some of these barriers were more directly experienced by parents in one province as opposed to another. For example, aboriginal parents in Regina, Saskatchewan uniquely experienced systemic racism as negatively affecting their employability efforts.

- Parents' experiences of work/family conflict, especially due to policy constraints, and how they choose to manage it demonstrate the structure/agency dialectic of living on assistance.

Discourse analysis of policy documents and interviews with parents demonstrate how policy constraints can determine their everyday behaviours. Interviews with parents, however, also reveal how they are active agents in balancing their family's needs. Some parents chose to manage their feelings of work/family conflict by conforming to policy restrictions and regulations and even learn the system of social assistance to the benefit of their families. Other parents were more resistant to this structural, policy determination of their everyday behaviours and actually developed ways to 'play' the system to their benefit, such as fraudulent reporting. Still other parents resorted to perpetuating their long-term experiences of poverty in order to gain short-term financial gain through the act of pawning.

Making Grander Theoretical Extrapolations

Beyond the findings listed according to the actual research questions posed in this study, several broader, theoretical conclusions can be made:

- The transformation of social citizenship rights to social assistance in the three western provinces, e.g. the receipt of income support conditional on employability efforts, must be understood as reflective of the broader context of shifting citizenship regimes as a result of neo-liberal ideology and diverse social, economic, and political factors.
- The current social investment citizenship regime, characteristic of broader Canadian society and provincial policy dynamics, is illustrative of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens' theoretical conceptualization of contemporary society as a risk society.
- Applying gender as a social structure as an over-arching framework to examine social assistance policy as one case illustrating the risk society, shifts in citizenship regimes, and the duality of structure/agency, makes it possible to see: 1) how gendered assumptions underpin social policy conceptualizations of individuals' entitlement relationships; and 2) how policy conceptualizations of social citizenship rights do not always match the actual everyday realities of individuals who come into contact with the policy.
- Incorporating mixed methodologies in studies of social policy enable one to emphasize the constant inter-play between structure and agency in any understanding of individuals' entitlement relationships.

Policy Implications

Over three decades ago, Piven and Cloward (1971) maintained that there are two primary functions of relief policies: 1) maintaining the civil order; and 2) reinforcing work norms. Though speaking about public welfare systems in the U.S., their arguments still resonate today. Through specific dimensions, including practices of surveillance, parents on assistance in the western provinces are subject to policy correction of one specific type of behaviour that is deemed morally problematic – unemployment. The five dimensions of the employability discourse comprehensively regulate or socially control parents' employability efforts. Such a statement is also supported by the work of other contemporary researchers. Gillies (2005) argues that the top-down projection of values and standards via policy produces social conformity. White (2003) asserts that social policy designed within the social investment regime can potentially contribute more to social regulation than social cohesion, decentralizing and diffusing citizenship in the process.

Indeed, given the findings of this study, I contend that while it cannot be denied that assistance caseloads have decreased and parents have exited assistance for participation in the paid labour market, one of the negative implications of emphasizing and regulating employability is the production of parents' experiences of social exclusion. To some extent, the social citizenship investment regime's promise that investing in individuals creates cohesion and solidarity is an illusion. When asked how they think the ministry views their entitlement relationships, many parents in the western provinces perceive that they are viewed by the ministry and their individual caseworkers as only numbers, not real people with hopes and dreams for a better economic and social future. These opinions of parents across all three provinces at times point to their own loss of self or even a loss of collective solidarity and are captured under the theme **I am a number not a person**.

> I think they [caseworkers] look at us as numbers. They don't look at us as people. And they don't like to look at individual situations unless they really, really need to.
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> I don't even know how to word it. It's kind of depersonalized. They [caseworkers] forget that these are people and not just a number. Not just a number on a cheque. They're not just an ID number. It's a real person, with real

> issues and, um, real problems, and real dreams and desires. And they just don't know maybe where to go or what to do. And that gets forgotten. With the government, we're just a number. So, when you go into the office to get a cheque, you're not a name, you're just a number, you know. So, it's depersonalized, you know, when you're standing in line…I said I'd love to see Campbell standing in this line just once.
>
> *Elizabeth, common law, 12 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

> We're a number. We're just a number. We're a number; we're a thorn in their paw.
>
> *Justine, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC)(AB)*

> Uh, I think they [caseworkers] just see you as a number, that you're just coming in there just for like oh yeah, you're just coming for the money and that's it. And they don't, they don't like respect you or have any like you know time for you as a person. They just see you and they're like okay. You know, you feel like a low down person.
>
> *Breanna, lone mother, 2 year old son (RRT) (AB)*

> Um I think they [caseworker] just view it as you're a number and you know like, this money is all they see because they're always like, like cutting back things.
>
> *Tanya, lone mother, 4 year old son (RRT)(SK)*

> When they call you sometimes, they just ask you, caseload number, this, this, this, hey. So that's what I am. I'm a number. I have a treaty number, I got a social security number…I have a caseload number. I'm just a number…Nobody ever sees the face. Nobody ever really sees the me. All they know is me the number. A parasite number.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

Even more alarming is the evidence from parents' interviews that suggests that the regulatory potential of social assistance policy actually exacerbates **social divisions**. This theme refers to statements from parents that seem to suggest that social assistance policy does not regulate employability in the same way for parents on assistance and that some parents are doing better than others in terms of benefits and supports received. This theme is related to the fault line of poverty introduced in Chapter 2 and revisited earlier here. This theme is also somewhat related to the 'playing favourites' theme introduced in Chapter 4 but it captures more than parents' perceptions of gender differences and points to social divisions that exist on the basis of income (e.g. parents on temporary assistance make less than compared to parents on continuous/disability assistance) or on the basis of race/ethnicity (e.g. aboriginal parents do better off on assistance than white parents).

> I have a real issue, not, and I mean you can tell by who I am, that I'm not bashing anyone per se, but people on disability can go out…First of all, they get more money…They get more money regardless than a person with children.
>
> *Debra, lone mother (guardian), 5 year old son (RRT) (BC)*

> I'm not prejudiced… There are more Indians on the system in XXXX that are popping out more kids cuz they know that's the only way. To me that is so wrong. We're not breaking the cycle, we're just renewing the cycle. There's a third generation, a fourth generation. You know, hello tell them stop being pregnant…
>
> *Mary, lone mother, 15 year old daughter (E-MC) (BC)*

> I do have native friends who don't have half the problems that I have on assistance. They just feed them left, right, and centre, giving them money all the time…I'm trying not to let my racism show to much…But I am racist to a degree you know and it's got a lot to do with, with um, 'you owe us, this is our land, blah, blah, blah.' It's got a lot to do with all of that. And they ah, they do get a lot more. Plus they get the money from their treaties, their reserves, they get the money from them. And Social Services can't touch that money from what my friends tell me…They've got money coming from everywhere you know, and it's just, and I have to struggle.
>
> *Jessica, lone mother, 3 children (E-MC) (SK)*

Some parents see beyond the racial dynamics associated with social division and point to class-based stratification and further stigmatization of the poor as problematic outcomes associated with the emphasis on employability in social assistance policy.

> Well, it's not *our* fault that the system's finally crap because they've let too many people take advantage of it…So now the way I see it by the way I get treated is that they see it as everyone is taking advantage of the system and no-one needs it. We all are just *using* it.
>
> *Reanne, lone mother, 2 children (E-MC) (AB)*

> And making actually, to me, it's like putting the lower class people, the ones who are on social assistance, and the working class people, making them clash in

> order, in order to cause this, this, this discontent amongst everybody. So hey! You're not working!
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

The reason these experiences of parents are an important policy implication of this study is because there has already been a federal government interest in re-building a collective sense of social cohesion amongst Canadian citizens. Paralleling the waves of social assistance reform from 1993-2004 in all three provinces, a related discussion began to take place about social citizenship, poverty, and social cohesion at the federal policy level. In 1996, the federal Department of Canadian Heritage identified social cohesion as an important policy issue as a result of the work of the Policy Research Initiative, an inter-ministerial unit created by the Privy Council (White, 2003). Since then, social cohesion has increasingly become the new 'buzz' word to refer to an interest in creating social policy that preserves the values of solidarity and collectivism, characteristic of the social rights citizenship regime, but also promotes the values of individual responsibility and active labour market participation, characteristic of the social investment citizenship regime.[67] Concerns about fostering social cohesion have become shared among governments, policy makers, and researchers alike (Maxwell 1998; McDaniel 2003; Stanley 2003; White 2003).

The experiences of some parents in the western provinces suggest that there is still far more political and policy work to be done before social cohesion does become an achievable policy goal in the social citizenship investment regime. Parents' experiences of social exclusion and their creation and experiences of social division while living on assistance are at odds with the social investment citizenship regime's pursuit of cohesiveness through individual responsibility and community involvement. Fortunately, in some policy circles, the importance of understanding the *social* realities of parents on assistance rather than their economic realities is becoming increasingly recognized.

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[67] According to the definition developed by the PRI is adopted, social cohesion is the "sum over a populations individuals' willingness to cooperate with each other without coercion in the complex set of social relations needed by individuals to complete their life courses (Stanley 2003: 9)." Social cohesion is a product of civil society, social capital, cultural or human capital, engagement and participation, and networks of cooperation (White 2003). The PRI model emphasizes individuals' responsibility for their sense of belonging in Canadian society through their active, cooperative participation in the labour market and their communities.

When social assistance programs become simply about dollars and cents or are defined primarily as an employment and income issues (Williams 2004), the everyday realties of parents on assistance - their social and cultural realities – become too easily ignored. Albelda (2001: 121) even goes to far as to argue that one of the major problems with welfare research is that:

> Welfare research, especially the most recent spate of research on women leaving welfare since welfare reform, tends to ignore the insights of work/family literature concerning the changing nature of work life, family demands, and the problems and costs that increased paid work causes at work and at home. Indeed, the welfare literature places so much emphasis on employment that the impact of reform on families is rarely of much concern.

Thus, the importance of one major finding of this study, that parents experience work/family conflict while living on social assistance, cannot be stressed enough. Work/family conflict is just one facet of parents' everyday realities that must be understood as problematically implicating their ability to engage in behaviour suitable for ideal responsible risk takers. Juggling everyday life responsibilities is not just a phenomenon of parents' participation in paid work. Parents on assistance also face conflicting demands and difficult dilemmas. Until the very different everyday realities of each parent are full recognized by social assistance policy, very few parents are going to fit into the *one size fits all* approach to responsible risks takers. Moreover, even if parents do make it through welfare-to-work programming successfully and exit assistance, they are not always met with the bounty of economic rewards promised to them. The fact that parents exit assistance into a labour market that is gender, race, and class-stratified is a final important policy implication of the results of this study.

For especially parents short on human capital or *investments*, welfare-to-work programming potentially pushes parents off of assistance into a labour market that may not be overly inviting and receptive. The majority of parents will experience low-wage work that is low-skilled, has few benefits, and is short-term. While it is recognized that other parents may experience a rise in family income once they leave assistance, still others may experience a cycle of exiting assistance for paid work but re-applying for assistance when this paid work does not suffice as a means of subsistence. The gendered effects of these transitions are pronounced. Mothers experience poorer market earnings compared to fathers and are more likely to work occupy lower rungs of the occupational hierarchy.

Using data from the Longitudinal Administrative Databank, Frennette and Picot (2003) track the economic well being of people who left assistance in the 1990s. They find that on average, incomes rose for people who left welfare. However, one-third of the people who left assistance experienced substantial declines in income. Frennette and Picot (2003: 17) offer some possible explanations for this decrease, such as tightened eligibility rules so that some people exited before they were ready to enter the labour market and people's acceptance of short-term labour market difficulties like low wage work in the hope of long-term prosperity. Cooke (2005) uses data from the Survey of

Labour and Income Dynamics to examine women's trajectories from assistance into paid work between 1996 and 2001. He finds that women's exit from assistance is often discontinuous; many women return to assistance after unsuccessful labour market experiences.

The complexity associated with the stratified labour market must also be understood as partially a function of social assistance policy. Simply put, welfare-to-work programming serves the market. While the justifications for welfare restrictions are usually moral, the functions served by these restrictions are economic (Piven and Cloward 1971: 177). The welfare system is not just an institution designed to regulate individual morality, it is also a labour market institution that has systemic consequences (Piven 1998). When individuals are provided with income that is not conditional on their labour market participation, this creates a floor under wages. When countries such as Canada engage in restriction of benefit amounts, this translates into a lowering of the relative wages of low-skilled workers (Piven 1998). Recall that a main impetus behind the 1993 Alberta reforms was the idea that individuals on welfare should not receive income comparable to other low-income individuals not on welfare. It was not until September 2005 that the government increased Alberta's minimum wage from $5.90 an hour, originally the lowest in the country, to $7.00 an hour (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2005b).

Piven (1998) argues that another way welfare affects the labour market is through the creeping conditionality characteristic of welfare-to-work programs. When there are no protections for individuals who engage in such programming (e.g. the guarantee of the minimum wage), workfare creates an indentured labour force of welfare recipients. For employers who contract with ministries in the provision of welfare-to-work programming, this reservoir of potential employees is usually inexpensive and often serves as a temporary quick fix, thereby creating instability in the very lives of those they are intended to assist. Rebecca's own experience with welfare-to-work programming illustrates what it is like to experience this kind of work:

> I've seen how those programs work. Employers only hire you until the, until the contract's over. And as soon as the contract's over, you're out the door and they're hiring another one so that they can get another half…You know you're only going to work so long. You're only going to work as long as social assistance pays, whatever they are quoted a month, they in employment pay for it. And, yeah, you're good till then you're no good after that… I don't know how, you know you're just there for show. You're not really hired or anything.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

To summarize, the findings of this study have implications for four inter-related areas relevant to discussions of social assistance policy and future change: social control and/or moral regulation; social exclusion; work/family conflict; the stratified labour market. Punitive policies may be designed to construct morally good citizens but they also fracture everyday lives and divide citizens. Until the new social cohesion agenda is properly connected to the poverty agenda, there will always be a policy disconnect between provincial welfare reforms and federal efforts at creating social cohesion. This disconnect is problematic because the social reality of work/family conflict that parents experience when trying to be an employable citizen in accordance with social assistance policy are not fully recognized. Finally, although some parents may successfully exit assistance for paid work, they may still experience low-income simply because welfare-to-work programming has perhaps not provided them the arsenal of skills and education necessary to adequately provide for their families.

And to Where from Here?

The difficult part of any analysis that involves a critique of policy is to advance ideas for positive, future change. To harness and address the more problematic consequences of the contemporary risk society and even the fault lines associated with the social citizenship investment regime is a daunting task. Nonetheless, as several researchers argue, it is one worth attempting. Given the findings of this study, I argue that one of the most important challenges to future, positive change to social assistance policy in the three provinces is that posed by the relationship between gender and citizenship – the de-/re-gendering of parents' citizenship rights. Indeed, recall that in Chapter 4, I concluded that our attempts to account for gender in our policies have not adequately kept up with the social changes associated with the risk society. Other researchers share recognition of this central challenge.

For example, McDaniel (2002) argues that there are new norms of citizenship in welfare states that directly affect women's lives: 1) the emphasis on market orientation to state practices; 2) the changing economic relations within families and changing relations of families to the state. Caring and intergenerational relations are two vectors of social change that demonstrate these emerging norms. With respect to the first norm, the trend toward privatizing caring, performed within the context of intergenerational relations, means that unpaid work is overshadowed and undervalued compared to market relations. Investments in the caring relations are not viewed as creating a market return (McDaniel, 2002). When caring and intergenerational relations are commodified, however, the state provides 'incentives' for family care and holds women accountable for the quality provision of such care (McDaniel 2002; Swift and Birmingham 2000). For parents on social assistance, such commodification is extremely problematic in that their caring responsibilities are enhanced but they have limited resources and experience no subsequent enhancement of their rights to support.

The second norm is characterized by the expectation that women will be responsible market participants (or responsible risk takers) and care providers. Indeed, social assistance recipients who would prefer to care for their children are seen as making no social contribution (Swift and Birmingham 2000). At the same time that women's responsibilities are growing in public and private domains, their citizenship rights are being eclipsed in both of these domains (McDaniel 2002).

Lister (2003) is concerned with revealing the dilemmas and contradictions associated with choosing gender neutral or gender specific models for social policy. She observes that when women's and men's claims-making is treated the same, gender is supposed to be irrelevant to entitlement relationships with the state. With respect to social assistance policy, this means that, in principle, both women and men are conceptualized as having equal entitlement to support on the basis of their employability efforts. However, in practice, underpinning this policy conceptualization are very real gendered assumptions that have problematic consequences for parents' everyday lives. Lister also recognizes such problematic outcomes of gender neutral models – forcing women into traditionally androcentric conceptualizations of citizenship stunts and contorts women's agency.

Adopting the alternative gender specific model would accommodating women's particular interests as gender differentiated citizens and recognize how their concerns and responsibilities in the private sphere implicate their social citizenship rights. However, as

Lister (2003) warns, efforts would have to be made to avoid the slippery slope of gender specificity – history has shown that it is relatively easy for policy makers to succumb to essentialism, perpetuating social constructions of all women as 'natural mothers.' For example, essentialist tendencies pervaded women's universal access to family allowances (Lister 2003). A gender-specific approach is also risky in that it can encourage ignorance to the differential experiences of citizenship exclusion for women on the basis of race and ethnicity.

The crux of the gender/citizenship conundrum is how to best balance an interest in equality and in difference. Fortunately, Lister (2003) offers some powerful suggestions in this regard. She warns that to deconstruct the category of women too greatly runs the risk of leaving no 'woman left to be a citizen' in discussions of citizenship and gender. Provided the differences of women are acknowledged, this does not deny the possibility that they can still share some interests as women. Women can experience shared structural and policy constraints, such as expectations to work in social assistance policy, but differently on the basis of race/ethnicity (Lister, 2003).

She also maintains that that the dichotomization between equality – gender neutral – and difference – gender specific – is unnecessary:

> Equality and difference are not incompatible; they only become so if equality is understood to mean sameness (as distinct from a principle that reflects what we have in common as human beings). In fact, the very notion of equality implies differences to be discounted or take into account so that, despite them, people are treated as equals for specific purposes. Equality and difference, are therefore, better understood as simultaneously incommensurate and complementary rather than antagonistic. The opposite of equality is inequality. To posit it as difference disguises the relations of subordination, hierarchy and consequent disadvantage and injustice, which underlie the dichotomy, and services to distort the political choices open to us (Lister, 2003: 97-98).

In resolving the dilemmas posed by gender neutral and gender specific models, the objective is not to abandon citizenship as a universal, equality based project, nor is it to embrace difference alone. Instead, the ultimate goal to strive for in policy is a differentiated universalism. For Lister (1997), this universalism stands in creative tension to diversity and difference and challenges the divisions and inequalities that stem from diversity. At certain times the rights of particular groups can be accommodated more so than the rights of other groups. However, over-arching principles of universalism and equality are balanced with policy flexibility to recognize different rights and needs or be sensitive to diversity (Dwyer 2004).

Approaching citizenship through the lens of differentiated universalism requires incorporating both an ethic of justice and an ethic of care. Citizenship is about rights/entitlements and social justice – an ethic of justice – and having compassion toward the interests and well-being of others – an ethic of care. Lister (2003) maintains that the equality approach underscoring an ethic of justice is enriched if combined with an ethic of care. An ethic of justice can even prevent the exploitative gendering of care relationships in terms of citizens' relationships with social policy.

What the adoption of a differentiated universalism means for social policy is quite simple. Lister (2003, italics added) maintains that citizenship that embodies a differentiated universalism gives equal status to women and men *in their diversity*. The ultimate policy choice is to adopt a *gender inclusive* approach to citizenship. This approach is directed at creating conditions to meet individuals' needs and assist them in their caring responsibilities so that all individuals can flourish as citizens. No longer would citizen-worker models be prioritized over citizen-carer models in social policy.

Policy models would prioritize both women and men's claims as worker/carers and carer/workers (Lister, 2003). Such an approach would force social policy to consider the constraints on citizenship that women's (and men's) responsibilities within the private and public sphere entail.

Lister is not alone in advocating that recognition of diversity as well as protection of universal rights is one pathway to improve upon social policy. Pointing to how restructuring has been differentially pursued across federal and provincial levels of government with different consequences, Battle and Torjman (1995: 439) maintain:

> The problem is not diversity. The problem is diversity in the absence of national principles and basis standards which ensure that being a Canadian brings certain rights of citizenship, regardless of province of residence.

Moreover, in the late 1990s, two out of the three provinces had ministry publications that stressed the importance of gender inclusiveness in social policy. In 1997, the then BC Ministry of Women's Equality released the publication *Gender Lens: A Guide to Gender-Inclusive Policy and Program Development* (British Columbia Ministry of Women's Equality 1997).[68] This document was intended to assist front-line caseworkers to provide equal opportunities for women and men by incorporating gender-inclusive language and analysis in all stages of program and policy design. The Ministry of Labour's Status of Women Office in Saskatchewan released a publication titled *Gender-Inclusive Analysis* in 1998, now no longer in print. Historically, the province of Alberta has not even had a ministry concerned with women's experiences, let alone publications designed to build equal opportunities for women and men.

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[68] The ministry of women's equality no longer exits. Women's Services is now a division of the ministry of community resources.

Although the BC publication was perhaps not designed with the intent of pursuing a 'differentiated universalism,' an excellent example of the potential of Lister's concept in practice is provided on page 9, which outlines the Guiding Principles of Gender-inclusive analysis. Table 6.0 provides three of the ten points:

Table 6.4 Select Principles from "Guiding Principles of Gender-inclusive Analysis"

• Women are not a homogenous group. The needs, interests and concerns of young women, older women, aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and immigrant and visible minority women will differ, as will the needs of men from these groups. • Policies, programs and legislation must endeavour to create equal outcomes for men and women. • Equal outcomes will not result from treating everyone the same. Protective measures are necessary to overcome systemic bias. In other words, if you want everyone to have the same opportunity to cross the finish line, you must recognize that not everyone has the same starting line, and make allowances for those differences.
Source: BC Ministry of Women's Equality, 1997: 9.

The differentiated universalism/gender inclusive approach to gender, citizenship, and social policy is promising. It could correct for many of the complexities social policy creates in individuals' lives. But is it possible? Unfortunately, no evidence exists on what extent the BC and Saskatchewan publications impacted policy, including social assistance policy, in the province. Nonetheless, parents' thoughts and opinions of how social assistance policy could be changed for the better in their province of residence suggest that differentiated universalism is an idea that could be pursued through gender-inclusive policy and is worth serious consideration. Prior to turning to what parents would do differently, it must be noted that asking parents how they would reform social assistance programs in the future was not a question of interest in this study (see the absence of such questions in the interview guide). Parents offered suggestions for change in response to a variety of questions (e.g. what is good/bad about living on assistance?; is the emphasis on work a good thing?).

What Parents Would Do

Earlier, research on the structure of the labour market and low-income parents' experiences within it was acknowledged as one policy implication associated with the results of this study. The theme **any job is NOT a good job** captures parents' awareness that their exit from assistance is not always matched with rewarding employment. Many parents desire for the idea that any job is a good job to be reconsidered in social assistance policy. This theme clearly ties in with many of the barriers to parents' employability discussed in Chapter 5. In maintaining that the kind of work they receive when exiting assistance is not good enough, many parents point to lack of education, poor skills, and day care as contributing factors to the inadequacy of the low-wage jobs they can expect to receive.

> And I think if even if they're trying to find work I think they should be allowed to stay on until they find a decent job anyway. Nobody can live off of a McDonald's job like they expect you to sometimes. And that's pretty well it, if they're capable of working I think they should work but be able to give them a chance to find a decent job.
>
> *Nadine, common law, 2 children (RRT-E) (AB)*

> See their big thing you know welfare even in their manuals is they don't care what kind of job you get. They don't care what they pay is. They don't care what type of work or what skills you have. You're basically mandated that you get out and work. We don't care what it is, if it's digging ditches… but like I say they've gotta take a different approach and stop that I don't care what kind of job you take, just take it. They gotta help a little bit more. If the person is requiring it or wants it they, they gotta be a little bit more sensitive.
>
> *Candace, lone mother, 6 year old daughter (E-MC) (AB)*

> And if they would, make more jobs and instead of them paying people to hire, hire us for a certain length of time, that's all a waste. Let's make permanent jobs…Well, even if it was a single mother working, for them to pay her child care. That would help her. Or a single father. Something like that…Now what they're doing now, like you can't even, they say it's half for your child care. And you have to pay the other half. And that has, if you're working minimum wage,

> you pay half. Everything's going to child care. You've got nothing to live on. So it's like Catch 22.
>
> *Rebecca, lone mother (guardian), 18 year old son (E-MC) (SK)*

This theme also refers to how some parents maintained that changes are required in the availability of programs and how the programs were administered so that parents can actually get good jobs.

> If they really want people off of assistance, they're gonna have to you know bring back the incentives. And, um, things that will help, especially if we're looking at single parents. Single parents need a lot more support networks than what just a single person does. A single person has the freedom to be able to walk out their door whenever they want. A single parent, on another hand, does not… So, they need to bring back some of those incentives for single parents to be able to actually get off of assistance. Whether it be training programs, full time daycare with full subsidy rates instead of partial…
>
> *Kara, lone mother, 3 children (E-AC) (BC)*

> I think they should work a little more on the education like I said that's a big thing because, yeah, you can get someone off assistance like get them in a minimum wage job but if any of them have any amount of kids. And a lot of people do that, are on assistance have more than two kids usually. That's very hard especially if they're younger kids because there's the daycare to consider, there's you know.
>
> *Caroline, lone mother, 4 children (E-MC) (SK)*

> I think they're good at, like they, they're [programs] good but they need to have a lot more programs …You know, like they need to have, they need to set them up at certain places like you know for schooling, like they should have certain classes a person can take because…Like I know they do help for PA [Provincial Allowance] and things like that, and um, but they just, the way they're going about it, it seems like they just force you. Okay, if you do this by this time or that by that time, okay, yeah, you're benefits are going to be on hold… But I mean ah, it just, they can be a little strict but they could be, they should be a little bit more empathetic. Like, um, helpful. Like help these people, like give them ideas where to go, like put them in some kind of a class or a course they could take, they could help out a lot more that way.
>
> *Michelle, common law, 3 children (RRT) (SK)*

Recall that in Chapter 5 the theme **half and half** captured parents' responses to the emphasis on work in social assistance policy. Parents would often qualify their assessment by pointing to their own personal situations, including family care responsibilities, or the situations of others. In these ways, parents are already highlighting the kinds of difference and diversity that social assistance policy, framed by a differentiated universalism, could better accommodate. Elizabeth provides one suggestion for how this could occur:

> There just needs to be assistance, not just financial assistance. You know emotional, mental and physical assistance... There's more to it than just black and white.
>
> *Elizabeth, common law, 11 year old daughter (RRT-E) (BC)*

Concluding Remarks

It is interesting to observe that little appears to have been done since the late 1990s with respect to reforming social policy in ways that are inclusive of gender diversity. As shown in this study, gendering parents' entitlement relationships with social assistance points to the necessity of returning to an interest in gender-inclusive policies. Social assistance policies across the three western provinces pursue active social assistance programs that are designed to invest in individuals and make them capable responsible risk takers. However, they do so without providing parents with adequate resources to manage work/family conflict and thereby improve their chances of exiting social assistance. Interviews with parents make it evident that their own social justice objectives are increasingly influenced by their own gender normative assumptions about work and care.

While the creation of responsible risk takers within social assistance policy serves the intent and purposes of the social investment citizenship regime and the market-oriented rhetoric of the Third Way, incorporation of a differentiated universalism rather than the traditional gender specific/gender neutral policy models could offer some improvements. Incorporating a differentiated universalism could potentially put the 'social' back into the social citizenship investment regime. Parents' unique experiences of work/family conflict could be recognized as evidence that even if designated as employable, not all parents are similarly capable of being active citizens. Parents on assistance could be recognized as engaged in multiple activities, some of which demonstrate that they are active citizens and some of which conflict with one another and are more of a burden to women as opposed to men. If social assistance policy were informed by a differentiated universalism and a goal of gender inclusiveness, there is the distinct possibility that front-line caseworkers, policy makers, politicians, and the general public (who are not on assistance) would see parents' multiple activities in their everyday lives as *work* and take pride in their contributions to society as citizens.

A differentiated universalism would make it necessary to see that both the paid and unpaid work of parents on assistance is socially important to their own and their family's lives. Indeed, what remains problematic in social assistance policy, let alone broader society is the fact that paid work continues to symbolize greater social value than unpaid work and that men's paid work is more socially valuable than women's paid work. In part, these views are a reflection of capitalist society. As filtered into social assistance policy, however, such beliefs only confirm the idea that active programming and contingent entitlement are the best tactics in contemporary society. Parents on assistance therefore experience the purposeful fracturing of their care work and employability via social policy. Employability usurps care and, thus, parents are engaged in a constant juggling of their everyday activities that is shaped by their efforts to think about or participate in paid work.

A differentiated universalism would involve the re-design of social assistance policy so that if rights are to be balanced with responsibilities within the social citizenship investment regime, they could be done so more fairly and not involve the moral regulation of the poor for the simple fact that they are poor. Finally, a differentiated universalism would acknowledge that the risks in contemporary society have implicated and changed the relationships between social structures and individuals but it would try to dampen the negative effects associated with them, especially on the basis of race, class, and gender.

And yet the question remains, how can this differentiated universalism be incorporated? Of course, the usual quantitative research avenue is open – policy change followed by evaluation. However, I would suggest that researchers still have one qualitative research avenue to pursue. I leave it to Ariel for a suggestion of how this can be done.

> It's like they [the Ministry] think that we're satisfied with this. It's like they think that we're just sitting back on our laurels counting our money. Well, you know what? We're not… Like just for one week, and let's make it just for fun, welfare week. Come and stay with me, come and live in my world…I'm not happy about where I am, but there's a reason why I'm here…
>
> *Ariel, lone mom, two children (E-AC) (BC)*

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Appendix A: Methodological Detail

Quantitative Data

In this study, quantitative data consist of descriptive statistics gleaned from outside sources. These existing statistics are primarily drawn from two agencies, Statistics Canada and the National Council of Welfare. I rely upon these statistics to make general observations about the current state of social assistance and poverty among low-income families within each province.

Qualitative Data: Discourse Analysis

Broadly speaking, the objective of discourse analysis in general is to deconstruct 'ways of understanding' (White 2004). In CDA, this deconstruction is complemented by two other objectives. First, researchers attempt to elucidate how ideologies are reproduced and, thus, how power relations are intermeshed with the representation of interests in discourses (Purvis and Hunt 1993). Second, researchers who rely on CDA attempt to resist structural determinism and do so by building upon Giddens' theory of structuration (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000; Teo 2000). "Giddens serves as the theoretical background to CDA's claim that actual language products stand in dialectic relation to social structure, i.e. that linguistic-communicative events can be formative of larger social processes and structures" (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 452).

CDA, then, lends itself well to an analysis of policy that is linked to the structure/agency dialectic that was detailed as an important theoretical influence in this study. Discourse is a social structure that is produced by the interactions of individuals with one another and has the potential to constrain individuals' interactions. Indeed, one of the core principles of CDA is that the language that constitutes policy discourse is understood as socially, economically, historically, and politically situated and constructed. In turn, discourse is also viewed as socially constitutive – individuals' understanding and interpretation of their realities are shaped by discourses (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000). As Wodak (2000: 187) explains, it is when language is seen as action, two consequences follow: 1) discourse involves power and ideologies; 2) discourse is historically connected, either synchronically or diachronically, with other communicative events.

The analysis of policy discourse in this study was primarily directed at answering my first research question, how political and ideological assumptions shape conceptualizations of parents' rights to assistance on the basis of their employability. Specifically, I analyzed public-use policy documents (e.g. annual reports, etc.) of the ministries of social services, 1993 to 2004, to identify ideological 'ways of understanding' (or constructing) employability and to document the complexity of and contradictions within these ways of understanding within the policy *discourse* (White 2004; Wodak 2000).[1] This intent in undertaking discourse analysis also allows me to partially answer my second research question of how policy shifts in conceptualizing social citizenship rights to social assistance are subject to processes of de-/re-gendering. [2]

A two-stage process made up this analysis. First, I read each ministry's annual reports and the corresponding public-use documentation of each ministry. Special attention was given to developing a general understanding of the objectives and timing of reform strategies, the specific changes made to policy and corresponding changes in department mandates and visions, and the reasons delineated for such change. The results of this initial analysis are documented in several tables discussed in Chapter 3. Second, I re-read the policy discourse within each ministry and then read comparatively across each ministry in light of the contextual background (i.e. the restructuring welfare state; shifts in citizenship regimes; provincial drivers of social assistance reform) outlined in Chapter 2. As a result of this second methodological step, I grouped the specific policy assumptions and strategies utilized to create parents' entitlement to assistance on the basis of their employability according to common dimensions. These five dimensions include: restriction, enforcement, surveillance, downloading, and de-/re-gendering.[3] Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 are devoted to revealing these dimensions in detail.

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[1] I recognize Foucault's extensive contributions to discourse analysis as a methodology. However, since I am not concerned with explicating the inter-relationships among discursive practices (e.g. newspaper discourse, political discourse, *and* policy discourse), nor how policy makers both use and are constrained by language or how discursive practices reproduce power relations (Stevenson 2004) in the creation of parents' entitlement to assistance on the basis of their employability, I have chosen to utilize CDA as the guiding methodology in my analysis of policy discourse.

[2] CDA consists of a research program with numerous theoretical and methodological approaches (Wodak 2000). In my use of CDA, I do not engage in a micro-analysis of text (e.g. analysis of choices and patterns in vocabulary, grammar, and text structure) that occurs in some studies that fully employ this method (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000).

Qualitative Data: In-depth Interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted to also answer how policy shifts in conceptualizing social citizenship rights are subject to processes of de-/re-gendering. Moreover, these interviews were undertaken to answer the final research question of this study: Do policy conceptualizations of parents' social citizenship rights to social assistance shape and/or conflict with their everyday market relations and family care relations?

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[3] These five dimensions are comparable to Elton et al.'s (1997:4) approach in their analysis of the 1993-1996 directions of Alberta welfare reform. According to Elton et al., there are five directions of reform. The creation of new programs, increased use of referrals, and mainstreaming of students suggest employment and training make up the first direction. The second direction, partnerships, refers to the new and expanded partnerships the ministry created with AECD and HRDC, especially the creation of single window service centres. Tighter eligibility criteria, deflecting potential welfare clients, and improved error and fraud detection suggest changes in service delivery structures and direction as the third direction. A fourth direction reflects an overall change in attitude of staff who emphasizes welfare as a last resort program and the increased expectations and placement of responsibility upon clients. Finally, the fifth direction refers to welfare benefits and changes made so that benefits do not exceed low-income working Albertans' wages, benefits are reduced for single employables, and supplemental benefits are reduced or eliminated. I used these five directions as a general guideline in my analysis of policy discourse. However, I also more sought out additional evidence that suggested how the move to an active program, with its emphasis on employability of recipients as a basis to claim assistance rather than need, was similarly or differently achieved in each province.

Sampling in Western Cities

I interviewed parents on assistance in BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Parents were approached to be participants in the study through a mixture of convenience and purposive sampling. The convenience factor refers to the choice of setting and city. I elected to meet parents at the Abbotsford Food Bank, the Edmonton Food Bank, and the Regina and District Food Bank. Connecting with parents at Food Banks was based upon my interest in meeting them through a non-profit (non-government affiliated) community organization run in support of their best interests. Food Banks were one such organization I was aware that existed in each of the three cities. They are also an organization overwhelmingly turned to by parents not able to make ends meet while on assistance.

There were other reasons of convenience for why these cities were chosen. Abbotsford, the pre-test city (3 pre-tests were conducted) for all subsequent interviews, was chosen because of its proximity to the researcher and its one central Food Bank location. Regina was chosen for its one central Food Bank and because its status as a capital meant the provincial ministerial libraries housing policy documents were easily accessible. This latter reason was also behind the selection of the Edmonton Food Bank. Of all three Food Banks, however, Edmonton is different in that it maintains one central Food Bank and distributes food through several depots (manned by churches or other non-profit agencies) throughout the city. Table A1 and Table A2 show selected demographics for each city.

Table A1: City Community Profile (2001 Census)[a]

	Abbotsford	Edmonton	Regina
City population	115,463	666,104	178,225
Income			
Persons 15 years and over with income	84,200	523,125	135,375
Median total income of persons 15 years and over	$ 20235.00	$ 21979.00	$ 23952.00
Percent Composition of total income[b]			
Earnings	76.50	78.50	77.00
Government transfers	13.50	11.10	11.10
Other money	10.00	10.40	12.00
Selected Family Characteristics			
Total number of families	31,890	176,955	48,355
Number of married-couple families	25,145	123,130	33,915
Average number of persons	3.2	3.2	3.1
Number of common-law families	2,305	21,305	4,905
Average number of persons	2.8	2.6	2.7
Number of lone parent families	4,440	32,520	9,535
Average number of persons	2.6	2.5	2.60
Number of female lone parent families	3,625	26,690	7,890
Average number of persons	2.6	2.6	2.6
Number of male lone parent families	810	5,825	1,640
Average number of persons	2.5	2.4	2.4
Median family income of all Census families	$ 51498.00	$ 56212.00	$58315.00
Median family income of couple families	$ 55261.00	$ 62663.00	$ 65559.00
Median family income of lone parent families	$ 29266.00	$ 31956.00	$ 29908.00

Source: Statistics Canada (2001)

a. This data refers to the city not the Census Metropolitan Area.

b. Percentages are based upon aggregate source amounts that are generated, rounded and subjected to independent suppression for confidentiality reasons prior to their calculation; percentages may not add up.

Table A2: City Community Profiles (2001 Census): Gender Distribution by Earnings and Ethnicity

	Abbotsford			Edmonton			Regina		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Earnings									
Number of persons with earnings	61,390	32,500	28,890	392,170	205,640	186,535	102,715	51,350	51,355
Full year, full time	26,640	18,735	10,910	204,055	118,830	85,255	56,685	30,935	25,755
Average Earnings									
All persons with earnings ($)	$28,104.00	$34,338.00	$21,090.00	$30,534.00	$37,355.00	$23,013.00	$30,067.00	$35,926.00	$24,208.00
Full year, full time ($)	$39,458.00	$44,035.00	$31,598.00	$41,388.00	$47,396.00	$33,011.00	$41,147.00	$46,931.00	$34,199.00
Aboriginal Population									
Aboriginal Identity Population[a]	2,500	1,195	1,300	30,365	14,075	16,290	15,295	7,130	8,170

Source: Statistics Canada (2001)

a. Included are those persons who reported identifying with at least one aboriginal group: North American Indian, Metis, Inuit (Eskimo) and/or reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian (Indian Act of Canada) or were members of an Indian Band or First Nation.

Of the three cities I chose to interview in, the outlier is Abbotsford in terms of its population size, the median income of individuals and families, and residents' greater reliance on government transfers. The smaller population can be attributed to it not being a capital city like the other two and it instead being a commuter and suburban outgrowth of the city of Vancouver. The lesser median personal and family income is a reflection of fewer people working full time, full year for lesser earnings than in the cities of Edmonton or Regina.

Despite these differences, the three cities are similar in their family sizes for both two parent (married or common law) and lone parent families and the percentage of their populations that are lone parent families (ranging from 3% to 5%). In addition, there are other similar social and geographic properties that the cities share that are not noted on the above tables: 1) farming is an important industry in the surrounding areas of Abbotsford, much like it is outside of Edmonton and Regina; 2) federal correctional institutions exist within both the cities of Edmonton and Abbotsford; Regina houses provincial correctional institutions;[4] and 3) aboriginal reserves exist on the surrounding boundaries of all three cities. The selection of these three cities makes it possible to consider whether parents have different or similar experiences on social assistance, accounting for provincial policy differences and the profiles of their communities.

In order to actually meet parents, I utilized purposive sampling. This technique required adopting one of several strategies: simply approaching parents to ask if they would be interesting in participating, posting advertisements on Food Bank bulletin boards and/or leaving accessible flyers at administration desks, and relying on Food Bank staff as 'informants' to make introductions easier (where appropriate). At each site, I spent anywhere from 4 to 24 hours per week. The schedule of data collection was as follows: 1) Abbotsford – February and March, 2004; 2) Edmonton – May and June, 2004; and 3) Regina – August, 2004. To meet potential interviewees as non-evasively as possible, I adopted the role of a participant in various ways at the Food Banks, e.g. helping with the distribution of food, packing groceries or carrying food to waiting cars, and playing with children while parents picked up their food. In my first meeting with each potential interviewee, I explained my research and showed them a flyer. If a parent conveyed interest, I took down their name and number and a few days later I telephoned them to set up a time for the interview. If the parent did not have a telephone, we set up the interview over the next few days. [5] The majority of interviews were held at the Food Banks. Where absolutely necessary due to transportation difficulties of the parent (e.g. no vehicle or bus fare) or their desire to be interviewed outside of the Food Bank for privacy reasons, interviews were held at parents' homes during the day. Prior to each interview, parents were asked to document their voluntary participation in the project by signing a consent form (see p. 289 of this Appendix). For their participation, parents were given a $25 gift certificate to a local grocery store to thank and compensate them for their time spent in the interview. Each interview ranged from 30 minutes to 1 ½ hours and was recorded on audio-cassette.

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[4] The closest federal institution is located in Prince Alberta, Saskatchewan.

Here, it is necessary to make an important note about the limitations of my sampling techniques. The use of convenience and purposeful sampling does suggest bias. Specifically how and where I chose to meet parents, and whom I finally met, does shape the findings I discuss in Chapters 3 through 6. My strategy of meeting parents on social assistance at Food Banks means that I interviewed a specific sub-set of the entire population of low-income parents in each city – parents in need of *food*, not just low-income parents more generally speaking. In addition, my interest in interviewing 'social assistance' recipients potentially biased the sample in that it was primarily made up of those not participating in employment and training programs. That is, depending on the province, some parents are considered 'off of welfare' if they are participating and receiving benefits through employment oriented programs. How parents interpreted my target criteria upon our first meeting meant that for each province, my sample constitutes a mix of parents who have and have not engaged in programming associated with social assistance policy and regulations.

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[5] Of all 46 respondents, 3 did not have telephones in their homes.

With respect to the Food Banks themselves, I did observe some noticeable differences the administration and organization of each Food Bank.[6] While this study is not an ethnography, nor does it purport to be field research more generally, I found it interesting to discover that each city has differently adapted to the needs of their clientele over time. For example, the city of Edmonton's need for the Food Bank is so great that this is why they have several depots to administer individuals' receipt of food throughout the city. Abbotsford's Food Bank, while considerably smaller, also has a bureaucratic structure that rivals the ones in place in Edmonton and Regina, especially in terms of their much stricter eligibility criteria. Regina's Food Bank even has full-time social workers who are contracted from the Saskatchewan government to provide educational and skills programming directly out of the Food Bank.

Demographic Sample Characteristics

With respect to the total qualitative sample, I interviewed 46 parents, 41 mothers (28 lone mothers and 13 common-law mothers) and 5 lone fathers. In each province, I interviewed 18 parents in BC, 13 in Alberta, and 15 in Saskatchewan. Table A3 shows the exact demographic make-up of the sample.

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[6] These are detailed in Table A4 (see p. 293-295 of this Appendix) in order to show how advanced and accepted Food Banking has become in Canadian cities.

Table A3: Demographic Characteristics of Qualitative Sample (N=46)

	BC (n=18)	AB (n=13)	SK (n=15)
Average			
Age (women and men)	33.83	29.54	32.67
Number of children	2.72	2.77	3.13
Number of children in residence	1.56	1.85	2.47
Time on social assistance (months)[a]	5.83	6.50	7.00
Time on social assistance (years)	4.83	4.57	8.09
Frequency counts			
Gender			
Women	15	13	13
Men	3	-[b]	2
Social Assistance			
Temporary/basic	13	12	15
Continuous (i.e. disability)	2	1	-
E.I. And social assistance	1	-	-
Recent exit from social assistance	2	-	-
Family Structure			
Lone mother family	13	9	6
Lone father family	3	-	2
Two parent family	2	4	7
Level of education			
Less than high school	1	2	-
Some high school	6	4	8
Graduated from high school[c]	4	2	3
Some post-secondary	4	5	3
Post secondary complete	3	-	1
Cultural heritage			
Aboriginal/Metis	-	3	9
Asian	1	-	-
Canadian/European	17	9	9

a. Of all parents, 12 BC, 7 AB, and 11 SK parents reported being on assistance for one or more year; all else reported being on assistance for less than one year.

b. Not applicable to parents interviewed in the province.

c. Grade 12 or G.E.D. equivalency.

The majority of the total sample (46 parents) consisted of lone mothers (41), an outcome of my sampling that makes sense given that lone mothers make up the largest proportion of assistance caseloads in all three provinces. There are some other interesting similarities and differences among parents across the three provinces. The average age of parents was 32 and the average number of children in residence was two; several parents had other children in other custody relationships. The majority of all 46 parents were white, had completed only some high school (18), were on basic social assistance and had been on for at least one year (30 parents in total), and had only some of their biological children living with them.

In terms of differences across all three provinces, Regina parents were on social assistance a longer number of years and zero Edmonton lone fathers were interviewed.[7] Twenty percent of the parents self-reported their cultural heritage as aboriginal or Métis. Since there is a greater concentration of aboriginal persons in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan (see Table A4), it is to be expected that the interview samples from Alberta and Saskatchewan enable comparisons to be made that cut across race, class and gender, whereas the sample from BC. does not.

Interviewing Parents

The qualitative interviews I conducted were approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. The interview guide(s) I relied upon were semi-structured and contained multiple open-ended questions organized around broad themes (see p. 290 of this Appendix). Because my primary objective in doing the qualitative interviews was to give voice to the "ground floor" experiences of low-income parents, I adopted a conversational, flexible and collaborative style of interviewing. It is important to note that the copy of the interview guide purposefully contains several different ways to ask the same question. This was to take into account how some parents may not understand the question as originally asked or how some interviews may require more formal structure than others. Hence, the guide was designed to provide options, where appropriate, of slightly changing the order or wording of questions to accommodate parents' thoughts and opinions.

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[7] While it was unfortunate that I was unable to meet any lone fathers, Marjorie Bencz, the Edmonton Food Bank Director, informed me that this phenomenon has a long standing at the Food Bank: few lone fathers rely on the Food Bank because they are able to find work and those that do use the Food Bank do so rather sporadically.

Such an approach to interviewing is not misguided. Paget (1983, cited in Devault 2004) observes that with intensive interviewing, the researcher and interviewee engage in a 'search procedure' in the construction of answers to questions that are not always amenable to being asked in a straightforward way. Devault (2004) explains that it is the concern with the questions that are asked and the ability to convey that concern to interviewees that recruits them as partners in the search. One component of the interview guide used for these qualitative interviews, the section on parents' understandings of policy change and how they conceive of their citizenship rights to assistance, contained questions that were complex and required parents to perhaps think in ways that they were not used to. The 'search procedure' with respect to these questions, as the transcripts indicate, certainly suggests the interviewee/ interviewer construction of meaning (Devault 2004).

My interviewing style was also influenced by my attempt to incorporate a feminist standpoint, which requires approaching the research from the positions of the women involved, from their perspectives and their everyday realities. In my interviews with lone fathers, I followed the principle set out by other scholars, that a feminist standpoint in research is also suitable for an examination of the everyday experiences of men (Hesse-Biber et al. 2004; Letherby 2003). Parents were encouraged to discuss their everyday life experiences living on assistance, their past labour market, education and employment programming participation, as well as their thoughts about the ministry's emphasis on employability. They were also encouraged to point out where they thought their lives were similar or very different compared to what is assumed about them in policy.

Analyzing the Data

The qualitative interviews with parents in the three provinces were transcribed over a period of nine months (February to November, 2004). Each interview was transcribed in full (e.g. all verbal communication, such as 'um', 'uh huh,' and sighs, laughter, and groans); the transcription, on average, took 5 ½ hours. Analysis of this data was undertaken through the use of the qualitative software program NVivo, which enables the researcher to organize and manage the coding of data in a systematic way.

Two main types of coding strategies were used: topic coding and analytic coding. Topic coding is a 'first step' procedure to create categories or codes that allow the research to reflect on material gathered on a specific topic (Morse and Richards 2002) . Topic coding parallels Glaser and Strauss's (1967) open coding, which requires breaking down the data and organizing it into categories (Seale 1999). In this study, topic coding involved reflecting on all of the different ways parents' communicated about topics within the interview guide and interpreting their responses as codes. My objective in engaging in this coding was largely explorative, to ask 'what is in here?' and to simply code the data in a way that sections off portions of text into tentative categories. As Morse and Richards (2002) explain, eventually one is able to see patterns in interviewees' responses and develop dimensions of their experiences. The next step is to then engage in analytic coding. Analytic coding requires moving beyond simply assigning codes to the data and actually theoretically interpreting them. Whereas topic coding can be thought of as "coding up from the data," analytic coding is best thought of as "taking off from the data" (Morse and Richards, 2002: 117-120).

Through analytic coding, themes that cut across interviews and were different or similar across provinces were recognized. These themes are denoted throughout the text with **bold** formatting; sub-themes that are less prevalent but still revealing are denoted with *italics* formatting.[8] Thematic analysis requires the searching for common threads present throughout the data; themes are not confined to just one segment of text (Morse and Richards, 2002). Here, incorporation of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) axial and selective coding also become important. Axial coding requires focusing in on a single category in order to examine how it connects with other categories and how the contents of a category have consequences. In the final stage of their coding paradigm, selective coding requires focusing on one category at a time in order to develop a core category that frames all other sub-categories of the data. Since this project was not designed as a pure grounded theory project, with one final category standing as a theory grounded in the data – one in which all categories coalesce – the thematic categories are allowed to stand alone as exemplars of parents' opinions and beliefs about social assistance policy in general and how their everyday lives match or contradict what is assumed about them within policy.

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[8] The most dominant themes discovered are signaled within the text by reporting the percentage of parents who in some way made reference to them.

Voluntary Consent Form

Title of Project: En/de-gendering Social Citizenship Rights to Social Assistance: Unraveling Inter-relationships among Low-Income Parents' Citizenship and Life-Linked Relations

Researcher: Amber Gazso
Affiliation: Department of Sociology, University of Alberta
5-21 HM Tory Building
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H4

Phone Number: of Food Bank location
E-mail: dependent on Food Bank location

Description of Project: The purpose of this research project is to conduct a comparative analysis of welfare reform (post 1993) in British Columbia (BC), Alberta and Saskatchewan. Interviews with parents on social assistance in each of these three provinces are a key component of this research.

Specifically, I will be asking you about living on social assistance and changes to social assistance. For example, how do you go about your daily life in terms of caring for your children and other family members? How do you feel about changes to social assistance in _________?

This Project and You and Your Family: By signing this consent form, you are volunteering to participate in an interview with the researcher at the ___________ Food Bank or your own home. You can expect to spend a maximum of one and a half hours being interviewed. The information you provide in this interview will be recorded on audio cassette. Upon completion of your interview, you will be reimbursed for your time by a $25 gift certificate.

The total information you provide in your interview will be typed, saved on computer disc, and stored in a locked file cabinet; it will be protected and kept confidential. All possible measures will be taken to ensure that your anonymity is maintained at all times. The researcher will assign you a pseudonym (false name) to be used in reference to your interview at all times. The researcher will also maintain confidentiality in all written documentation and verbal reports of the results of the project.

You may withdraw from the project during the interview or at any time after the interview by informing the researcher. Any information that you have provided up to that point will be destroyed. If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Formal Consent by Signature:

I, ___________________________, hereby consent to be interviewed by Amber Gazso.
(please print name)

Interviewee:______________________________ Date: _________________

Researcher:_____________________ Witness: ______________________________

Interview Guide

I. Living on Social Assistance

a. Structure of the Day

What does a typical day look like for you (and your partner)?

What sort of activities do you (and your partner) do during the day?

Who do you spend time with?

Applicable to two parent families:
Who does the household chores in your house?

Who does the caring work (or child care) in your house?

b. Market Relations I: Participation in the Labour Market

What kinds of jobs have you had?

How many hours per week did/do you work?

Applicable to two parent families where partner works:
Tell me about your partner's job history.

How many hours per week do they work?

c. Market Relations II: Participation in Education and Employment Training Programming

Tell me about the Employment Plan that makes it possible for you to get social assistance.

Have you participated in any employment or education training programs?

What things make it difficult/easy for you to do employment and education training?

How do you feel about the Ministry's (or employment assistance workers') emphasis on getting people into jobs (or, to participate in education and employment training programming) that is part of your being able to get social assistance?

Applicable to two parent families:
Has your partner participated in any education or work training programs?

d. Family Care Relations: Children and Other Family Members

What kinds of care do you provide your children/other family members? (i.e. making/helping with meals, bathing/helping with personal care, being supportive, teaching)

In a typical week, how much time do you spend caring for your children/other family members?

Are there other people you rely on to help you care for your children/other family members?

Are there things that you would change about the care arrangements for your children/other family members?

How do your relationships with other family members make your care for your children easier/more difficult?

What things about being on social assistance make it difficult/easy to care for your children?

What kinds of help do your children/other family members give you?

If two parent family: What kinds of care or help does your partner give you?

II. Balancing: Policy Objectives and Daily Lives

How do you balance caring for your children/other family members and working/doing work and education programming? (or: Do you ever find it hard to work/hold a job and also look after your family?)

How do you balance caring for your children/other family members and trying to do things that show your Employment Assistance worker that you are thinking about getting off of social assistance and/or working? (or: Do you ever find it hard to care for your children and...)

III. Changes to Social Assistance

Social Citizenship Rights to Social Assistance and Change

Since you have been on social assistance, what are some changes to social assistance that you have noticed?

How have these changes affected you/people you know?

What do you know about the Ministry's adoption of time limits for people on social assistance who could be working instead of being on assistance? **(question specific to BC parents)**

What do you think about the Ministry's plans to cut off benefits to some single people who have accessed two out of five years of benefits and have not met the expectations of their employment plans in April of this year?

What do you think about the Ministry's plan to reduce benefits to some parents who have accessed two out of five years of assistance and have not met the expectations of their employment plans? **(question specific to BC parents)**

How do you think the Ministry of Human Resources choice to reduce benefits to parents who have accessed two out of five years of assistance will affect you/them? **(question specific to BC parents)**

.... Now I am interested in your views about the reasons people should get social assistance and how you think that has changed over time in BC.

What do you think are some reasons that parents should get social assistance?

What are some of the reasons that the Ministry say parents should get social assistance?

Do parents who need assistance get it?

What do you think about the idea that parents have a right to social assistance?

Do you think the Ministry (or caseworkers) views parents as having a right to social assistance?

With the emphasis on getting people off of social assistance and into job, do you think the Ministry has changed in how it views parent's rights to social assistance? (option: Do you see any differences in how people get social assistance now compared to five years ago?)

What is the government doing well/poorly with social assistance recipients?

Gender, Social Citizenship Rights to Social Assistance and Change

How do you think your experiences as a Mom/Dad on social assistance are different than the experiences of Mom's/Dad's on social assistance? (option: How do you think Mom's participation in caring/working/education or employment training programs is different than Dad's participation in them?)

What are some ways you think that Mom's and Dad's are treated differently/similarly in terms of getting social assistance?

Tell me about the differences you see between lone parent families and two parent families on social assistance.

III. Other Issues of Interest: Finances and Community (Citizenship) Action

What other kinds of other support, say financial or community/family support, do you receive besides social assistance?

What kinds of things are making it difficult/easy for you to get off of social assistance?

How do your children factor into your decision about getting off of social assistance?

What actions are you taking to get off of social assistance?

What are some of the ways you are involved in the community? (i.e. volunteer work, children's hobbies)

Closure. Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview.

Table A4: Comparisons across Food Banks

	Abbotsford	**Edmonton**	**Regina and District**[c]
Type of Facility	One central warehouse facility	One central warehouse facility and various food depots	One central warehouse facility
Food Bank Mission/Vision	The mission of the Abbotsford Food is: "to strive to ensure that all the people of Abbotsford have the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter on a daily basis."	The mission of the Edmonton Food Bank is "to be stewards in the collection of surplus and donated food for the effective distribution, free of charge, to people in need in our community.[a]	The Regina District Food Bank is an organization of citizens who desire to enhance human dignity by eliminating chronic hunger and alleviating poverty in our society.
Source of Food	-Donations by community agencies (i.e. public or private businesses such as grocery stores) or individuals -Food drives -Gleaning	-Donations by community agencies (i.e. public or private businesses such as grocery stores) or individuals -Food drives -Gleaning	-Donations by community agencies (i.e. public or private businesses such as grocery stores) or individuals -Food drives -Gleaning
Average number of clients per month	Approximately 3,000 people are helped at the Food Bank each month; 1,500 of these individuals are children	Approximately 13,000 people receive receive food hampers each month; 5,000 of these people are children	**July 2004**, 10, 698 people used the food bank: 5,756 adults (2,794 men and 2,962 female) and 4,942 children - 3,866 orders were placed, including 4,942 children - Of all parents who placed order, 745 were female lone parents, 123 were male lone parents, 626 were two parent families and 301 were families with two parents and other adults
Notification of need	Telephone or in-person notificaton of need at central warehouse	Telephone notification of need to outside service agency[b]	Telephone or in-person notification of need to the Food Bank or an outside service agency

Table A4 Cont'd.			
Notification of need, con't.			Client must contact referral agency one week in advance; referral agency contacts Food Bank who provide date and time for pick-up -10 referral agencies have pre-booked spots-clients can come for pick-up without direct contact with Food Bank
Eligibility criteria	-Proof of monthly budget: income per month (i.e. assistance, EI, working, student loan, pension,child tax benefit, other) - Proof of total expenditures per month (i.e. rent, hydro, car insurance, cable t.v., student loan, transportation, phone, laundry and other)	- Request for assistance and naming of source of income but not amount - Proof of identity (i.e. health cards and /or rent receipt) dependent on depot	- Request for assistance and naming of source of income but not amount - Proof of indentity: Saskatchewan Health Care Cards must be presented for all household members
Hamper pick-up	-Picked up once per month at central warehouse - Number of clients served varies between 10:00-12:30pm (families) and 1:00-3:30pm (singles) Mon.-Thurs.	- Picked up once every three weeks at designated depot -Number of clients served varies per once a week depot hours	- Picked up bi-monthly at central warehouse - Approx. 25 clients served per hour 10:00-12:30pm and 1:30-4:30pm Monday-Friday[d]
Access to extra food	Access to bread, produce and damaged, canned goods once per week	Not applicable	Access to one bag of bread and produce once per week
Additional food services	-Garden box - $5 per month for fresh fruits and vegetables -Christmas hampers	-Additional services dependent on agency affiliated with depot -Christmas hampers	- $60 per month for two fresh/healthy hampers (i.e. milk, eggs, etc.); deducted from social assistance cheques -R.E.A.C.H. (Regina Education and Action on Childhood Hunger -Christmas hampers - Voluntary work by client for four hours can esure their receipt of a cleaning products hamper

Table A4 Cont'd.			
Suspension	- Suspension and time period is at the discretion of the staff - Potential suspension for abusive, innappropriate behaviour toward staff	- 3 month suspension for consistently not picking up hamper on requested date - Over-usage of food bank, i.e. picking up hamper from more than one location more than once every three weeks	- Effective August 1, 2004, one month suspension for not picking up hamper on date requested (or cancelling hamper) - Potential suspension for abusive, inappropriate behaviour toward staff

a. The Edmonton Food Bank first originated as the Edmonton Gleaners Association.

b.The Edmonton Food Bank is affiliated with 135 other agencies, churches, and food depots. Clients do not pick up food at the central warehouse. Clients telephone their request for a hamper to the outside agency, which then places the oder with the central warehouse. The central warehouse prepares the hamper but the food is either delivered to the appropriate depot (most often at various churches throughout the city) or picked up by the agency and taken to the depot.

c. District includes surrounding communities of: Pilot Bute, White City, Lumsden, Craven, Regina Beach, Rouleau, Pense, Sintaulta, Balganie, and Edonwald

d. Number of clients per hour does not include out of town pick ups or new clients.

Appendix B: Details on Parents' Lives

	Market Relations				Family Care Relations			Health			Policy Relationship	
	Worker Status	Attend Program ?	Past Work Experience	Education Level	Children in Residence	Children Outside Care?	Family Structure	Anxiety	Depressed	Addiction	Time Status	Cycling on and off
BC												
Joanne	E-MC	No	No	Gr. 7	1		LM	Yes!	No	No	Temp.	No
Anne	E-AC	Yes	Yes	Gr. 8	0	2	CL	No	Yes	Yes+!	Temp.	No
Stephen	E-D	No	Yes	P-s diploma	1	1	LF	No	No	No	Cont.	No
Amy	E-AC	Yes	Yes	Gr. 11	1		LF	No	No	No	Temp.	No
Linda	RRT	No	Yes	P-s diploma	1	3	LF	No	Yes	No	Temp.^	No
Debra	RRT	No	Yes	P-s certificate^{a}	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Paula	E-D	No	Yes	Gr. 12	1		LM	No	Yes!	No	Cont.	No
Kara	E-AC	No	Yes	Gr. 12	3		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Brenda	RRT	No	Yes	Gr. 12	4		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	No
Mary	E-MC	No	Yes	P-s certificate	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	No
Scott	E-AC	No	Yes	Gr. 10	1		LF	No	No	No	Temp.	No
Karen	RRT-E	No	Yes	P-s diploma	1	1	LM	No	Yes	No	Temp.	Yes
Pat	RRT	No	Yes	Gr. 12	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.(EI)	No
Ariel	RRT	No	Yes	P-s diploma	2		LM	No	No	Yes	Temp.	No
Elizabeth (Ted)$	RRT-E	No	Yes	P-s degree	1		CL	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Kendra	E-AC	No	Yes	Gr. 10	3		LM	No	Yes	No	Temp.	No
Lisa^{b}	E-AC	No	Yes	Gr. 10	4	1	LM	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Robert	E-MC	No	Yes	Gr. 9	1	1	LF	No	Yes!	No	Temp.	Yes
AB												
Miranda	RRT	Yes	Yes	P-s diploma	2		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Christine	RRT	Yes	Yes	Gr.12	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Doreen	E-MC	Yes	Yes	P-s diploma	2	4	CL	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Justine	E-MC	No	Yes	Gr.12	2		LM	No	Yes!	No	Temp.^	Yes
Candace	E-MC	No	Yes	Gr.12	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.^	Yes
Reanne	E-MC	No	Yes	Some p-s	2		LM	Yes!	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Andrea (Bill)*$	RRT	No	Yes	Gr. 11	1		CL	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Breanna	RRT	Yes	Yes	Gr. 10	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	No
Julia (Jon)$	E-MC	No	Yes	Gr. 7	0	7	CL	No	No	No	Cont.	Yes
Kelly*	E-FR	Yes	Yes	Gr. 10	5		LM	No	No	No	Temp.^	Yes
Nadine	RRT-E	Yes	Yes	Gr. 12	2		CL	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Tracy Lynn*	E-MC	Yes	Yes	Gr. 7	3	1	LM	No	Yes!	No	Temp.	Yes
Heather	E-FR	Yes	Yes	Gr.12	2		LM	No	No	No	Temp.^{d}	Yes

Appendix B Cont'd.												
SK												
Jessica	E-MC	No	Yes	Gr. 12	3		LM	No	No	Yes+!	Temp.	Yes
Janice*	RRT	No	Yes	Gr. 9	2		LM	No	No	No	Temp.^	Yes
Theresa*	RRT	Yes	No	Gr. 9	6		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	No
Michelle*	RRT	No	Yes	P-s certificate	3		CL	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Tamara*	RRT	Yes	Yes	Gr. 12	5		LM	No	No	No	Temp.^	Yes
Rebecca*#	E-MC	Yes	Yes	P-s degree	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Brandon	RRT	No	Yes	Gr. 10	1		LF	No	No	Yes+	Temp.	Yes
Georgia*	RRT	Yes	Yes	Gr. 12	4		LM	No	No	No	Temp.%	No
Loraine (Colin)*$	RRT	No	Yes	Gr. 10	3		CL	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes
Courtney*	E-MC	No	No	Gr. 9	1	3	CL	No	No	Yes+!	Temp.	No
Tanya	RRT	Yes	Yes	Gr. 12	1	1[c]	LM	No	Yes+	No	Temp.	Yes
Diane#	RRT	Yes	Yes	Gr. 9	1		LM	No	No	No	Temp.	No
Lillian*	E-FR	No	Yes	Gr. 11	2		CL	No	Yes	No	Temp.[e]	Yes
Caroline	E-MC	No	Yes	Gr. 12	4		LM	No	Yes!	No	Temp.	Yes
Joseph	RRT	No	Yes	Gr. 11	1		LF	No	No	No	Temp.	Yes

a. p-s = post-secondary

b. Lisa is the ex-partner of Scott. Her and Scott's two year old daughter is currently in his care.

c. Tanya shares care for her son with her parents for mental health reasons.

d. Heather is exempt from seeking work because her eldest child has a severe disability.

e. Lillian is exempt from seeking work because she has been caring for her spouse during his cancer treatment.

*See p. 298 for Legend

Appendix B Legend

E-AC: exempt from seeking work due to youngest child's age

E-D: exempt from seeking work due to disability (on continuous assistance)

E-FR: exempt from seeking work due to family changes (i.e. leaving an abusive relationship; child with disability)

E-MC: exempt from seeking work due to medical condition (psychological or physiological health issue; drug abuse)

RRT: responsible risk taker who is expected to work

RRT-E: responsible risk taker who is in the process of exiting or has recently exited assistance due to finding employment

LM or LF: lone mother family; lone father family

CL: common law family

Temp: interviewee temporarily on assistance

Cont: interviewee continuously on assistance

$ Refers to when interview with mother took place with father present; data is presented for mother only.

! Denotes reason for medical exemption from seeking work or disability (continuous assistance) status

* Denotes metis or aboriginal status

+ Denotes reason for being on assistance

^ Denotes fleeing an abusive relationship as reason for being on assistance

% Refers to interviewee currently living with an abusive partner

# Denotes interviewee's past experience of physical abuse at the hands of the father of one of their children.